After being unable to release a 2015-2016 journal, we are very excited to resume this year with our 9th issue edition. You will notice that we changed the journal’s name from The Undergraduate Journal of Middle East Studies to The Undergraduate Journal of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations to reflect the broader scope of history and culture covered in both the NMC department itself and in the essays presented in this journal. The papers we selected for publication cover a period of about 4 millennia, going back as far as the 2nd millennium BCE in Assyria, Mesopotamia, and Ancient Egypt, and leading right up to the recent history of Arab and North African nation-states. We have also decided to put the spotlight on the academic talent of undergraduate students in the NMC department, so every paper presented in this edition of the journal was written by a University of Toronto student, specifically for a course in the NMC department. I would like to thank all the people in the NMCSU executive committee who appointed me as the editor-in-chief and who were just as keen as I to ensure that the journal get published this year. Most importantly, I have to mention that this journal would not have been completed were it not for the help of all our editors — especially our layout editor, Lila Nawar, who was indispensable in putting everything together so that we could have a journal ready for print and publication. I would also like to thank Jason Silvestri from the NMCSU executive committee for his help with suggestions regarding the front cover of the journal. We hope that this journal provides a glimpse into some of the excellent talent we have here at the Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations department at the University of Toronto.

Omar Qashoa
Editor-in-Chief
2016-2017

Editor-in-Chief: Omar Qashoa

Editorial Board:
Mahdi Chowdhury
Hania Hameed
Mehreen Zahra Jiwan
Matthew Johnstone
Gabi Lichtblau
John Zabbal

Print Design/Layout Editor: Lila Nawar

Marketing Coordinator: Haseeb Hassan

Special Thanks
Department of Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations
Arts & Science Students’ Union

Credits
Contents

From Nationalism to a People’s Arabism: The Many Faces of Arab Unity
Aylin Manduric
University of Toronto
8-15

Empire and Nation-State as History and Construction: An Analysis of Imagined Empires: A History of Revolt in Egypt
Riam Kim-McLeod
University of Toronto
16-21

Modern Amazigh Identity Discourses in Morocco
Judy Androsoff
University of Toronto
22-33

Khusrau I Anushirvan – The Great Sasanian Ruler
Alyssa Atef
University of Toronto
34-37

Folktales and Magic in Ancient Egypt
Naomi Sinclair
University of Toronto
38-46
Ancient Egyptian Treatment Practices in Women's Health
Bianca Grier
University of Toronto
47-51

Apocalyptic Literature in Mesopotamia 1500-100 BCE
Erin Mandel
University of Toronto
52-58

On Wives, Husbands, and Letters: Female Literacy and Self-Determination in Old Assyria
Loreina Jones
University of Toronto
59-63
This paper will explore some of the changes in the nature and function of appeals to Arab unity in Egypt from the decline of Arab nationalism in the mid-twentieth century to the rise of a more solidarity-oriented concept of Arab unity during the twenty-first century Arab Spring movement. In the thirty years following the Camp David Accords, Arab Nationalism was a useful ideology for organizing political claims. While Arab nationalism has not fulfilled this function since its decline in the 1970s, the sense of connection between the people living in the Arab states re-emerged as a mobilizing force during the 2011 Arab Spring.

Defining Arab Nationalism

Before delving into the dynamics of the decline of Arab nationalism, it is important first to define the term. Arabism, pan-Arabism, and Arab nationalism are used interchangeably in some contexts and are defined as overlapping concepts in others. Some scholars avoid presenting a concrete definition in their work, and others, like Hassan Nafaa, define Arab nationalism as an elite or intellectual concept that pan-Arabism mainstreamed.1 In an essay published in 1987, Nafaa associates Arab nationalism with pan-Arabism and defines pan-Arabism as an ideology comprising a shared feeling of belonging to an Arab nation; a glorious shared history; and a desire for unity.2 This definition largely blurs the distinction between pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism and makes it unclear whether Nafaa believes that nationalism necessarily includes an aspiration to acquire a territorially bounded state, or merely a claim for legitimate “participation in the actual international system of nations and civilizations.”3 Further complicating matters, Nafaa adds that Arab nationalism means different things to different groups and has intellectual origins that are through the early twentieth century. Dawisha defines nationhood as “a human solidarity, whose members believe that they form a coherent cultural “different and often conflictual.”4 This paper will instead rely on Aeed Dawisha’s 2003 book Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century, which offers a useful foundation for understanding the differences between Arab nationalism and other calls for Arab unity.

In the book’s first chapter, Dawisha begins defining the concept of Arab nationalism, and traces its development whole, and who manifest a strong desire for political separateness and sovereignty.”5 He notes that, in the twentieth century, Arab nationalism comprised a feeling of Arab “unity” and a call for political unity, in which a common Arab state would serve as a vehicle for those aspirations.6

---

2 Ibid., 149.
3 Nafaa, “Arab Nationalism,” 149.
4 Ibid., 149.
6 Ibid., 4.
Dawisha asserts that it is “a desire for political separateness” that distinguishes a nation from a mere ethnic group.7 Here he seems to diverge from Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, whom he cites in his discussion of nationhood.8 While Gershoni and Jankowski do not require a desire for independent, sovereign statehood as a pre-requisite for a group’s claim to nationhood, Dawisha considers a “self-derived desire to achieve political sovereignty within a recognized territory” to be the defining feature of a nation.9 National claims for political unity must therefore be demanded only within the bounds of a “specified demarcated territory.”10 This definition of Arab nationalism – that is, a definition “centred on the ultimate goal of Arab political unity and the desire for a unitary Arab state” – helps Dawisha to avoid some of the conceptual haziness found in other works on the subject.11

The Rise of Arab Nationalism

Though some scholars trace the origins of Arab nationalism to the 1916 Arab Revolt and Rashid Rida’s call for political separation and Arab statehood, Dawisha rightly links the emergence of Arab nationalism to the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the end of World War I.12 At that time, Iraq was the launching point for a formally propagated “Arab Nationalism.”13 This was promoted through a national education system that drew its ideas from Sati’ al-Husri, a nationalist thinker and former education minister in Syria.14 In the 1920s and 1930s, Egypt, which later rose to the forefront of the movement, showed little interest in striving for Arab unity.15 Husri, however, thought that Egypt’s location, size, and history of interactions with other global entities made it the best-suited territory in the Arab world to fulfill the promise of Arab nationalism.16 As history would have it, he was proven right, and this was due in part to events in Palestine..

In particular, the intensification of the Palestinian struggle during the Arab Revolt of 1936-39 started to increase the salience of the Arab identity in Egypt.17 The Revolt was followed by a number of pan-Arab conferences as well as a “heightened awareness by peoples and leaders alike of the possibilities of Arab solidarity.”18 The Egyptian government itself faced popular pressure to cooperate with other Arab leaders to start a solidarity movement, and, before engaging with Britain on the Palestine question, Arab leaders met in Cairo to settle on a coherent position to defend in the name of all Arabs.19 Throughout World War II, clubs like the Arab Union (Nadi al-Ithid al-’Arabi) became increasingly popular, and by 1945 the Arab League had been formed and headquartered in Cairo.20 The 1948 inception of the Jewish state of Israel marked one more common cause for the Arab states to unite over, although pan-Arab cooperation during the first Arab-Israeli War ultimately failed.21 Despite temporarily highlighting the inability of the Arab states to mobilize and coordinate their troops successfully against Israel, the loss of the Arab-Israeli war inspired the then colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser and a group of army officers to overthrow the Egyptian monarchy.22 Nasser’s subsequent regime would carry the ideology of Arab nationalism to its peak — and later serve as a catalyst for its decline.

---

7 Ibid., 7.
8 Ibid., 5.
9 Ibid., 8.
10 Dawisha, Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century, 13.
11 Ibid., 8.
12 Ibid., 40.
13 Ibid., 47.
14 Ibid., 47-8.
15 Ibid., 103.
16 Ibid., 105.
17 Dawisha, Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century, 108.
18 Ibid., 109.
19 Ibid., 116.
20 Ibid., 118, 123.
21 Ibid., 128.
22 Ibid., 134.
The formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) on February 1, 1958, represents the most significant example of the Egyptian leadership applying Arab nationalism (and not merely pan-Arabism) to foreign policy. It was a clear attempt to bring multiple discrete jurisdictions together under a common Arab state. Egypt and Syria were fused together at breakneck speed, and the project, unsurprisingly, proved unsustainable. Nasser’s authoritarian tendencies clashed with Syria’s more liberal leanings. In addition to controversial military appointments and firings, the introduction of slow Egyptian bureaucratic practices and new economic restrictions triggered both capital flight and commodity shortages. In September 1961, the alienated Syrian military, supported by capitalist discontents and other struggling elements of Syrian society, launched a coup to separate Syria from the UAR. Even with these struggles, Arab nationalism, as an appealing ideology, continued to hold some currency until the catastrophic failure of the Six-Day War in 1967 and the death of Nasser, the protagonist of the movement, in 1970.

The Eclipse of Arab Nationalism

In the following decades, a number of competing interests and identities came to supersede Arab nationalism in importance and political usefulness. Dawisha links the decline in Arab nationalism to a rise in state-based identities. Fouad Ajami, who argued in 1978 that pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism were dead, notes that some of the most salient constitutive features of the ideologies either ceased to be relevant after the mid-1960s or were eclipsed by more pressing concerns and interests — most significantly, state interests. Hassan Nafaa, even in his critique of Ajami, acknowledges the disparities between the Arab states, calling oil states the “natural foes of pan-Arabism,” and remarking that differentials in economic opportunity and political concerns are just a few of the divisions highlighted by Arab nationalism’s detractors.

Some of the most glaring incompatibilities between state and Arab national interests might be seen in the circumstances of Egypt and Palestine in the mid-twentieth century. Ajami recognizes that the birth of Israel and the defeat of Palestine in 1948 were perceived as “an injury to the pride and integrity of the entire Arab world [and] a deeply wounding and traumatizing experience.” He also realizes that Anwar Sadat played a significant role in detaching Egypt from its Palestinian trauma by implementing a more self-centered foreign policy. Egypt’s interests clearly diverged from those of the Palestinians on the issue of Israel, especially after the Six-Day War, which Ajami refers to as “the Waterloo of pan-Arabism.” Not only did Egypt and Palestine have domestic interests that were at odds with one another, but each had interests that could more easily be addressed by a state-centered framework than by a trans-state ideology like Arab nationalism.

This is clearest in the case of Palestine, where self-determination and political legitimacy were the most salient issues of the twentieth century.
While the feeling of shared failure in 1948 made Arab nationalism a useful tool for mobilizing support from different Arab states, the failure of the Arab world to protect Palestine adequately made it clear that something more was needed.\footnote{Ibid., 370-71.} Another issue is raised by the goal of the Palestinians in their conflict with Israel: identifying as Arabs above all else hardly makes the case that Palestinians require a state of their own. Ajami frames the danger of Arab nationalism as one that delegitimizes boundaries and aspirations that belong to one Arab sub-group and operate in tension with pan-Arabism more broadly.\footnote{Nafaa, “Arab Nationalism,” 135.} In addition to these conceptual tensions, Palestinians faced challenges to their territorial sovereignty from their fellow Arab states, most notably from the Jordanian monarchy, which claimed the West Bank.\footnote{Ajami, “The End of Pan-Arabism,” 372.} It would be counterproductive for Palestinians to let themselves be caught under the umbrella of Arab nationalism when doing so could undermine their territorial claims to sovereignty. Ajami highlights the general acceptance within the Arab world that the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must entail the self-determination of the Palestinians: “Whereas it was once heresy to speak of an independent Palestinian state – after all, Palestine was supposed to be part of a larger Arab entity – the Palestinians have come to realize that they too require the normalcy of statehood.”\footnote{Ibid., 371.}

At the same time, people in Egypt were suffering from significant economic hardships. Talented young people struggled to find jobs, and those that succeeded often struggled to make ends meet.\footnote{Ibid., 370.} Ajami notes that these Egyptians, who were placed at a disadvantage by Arab nationalism, began to view the ideology as an implement that was being used to make them fight – and perhaps die – for the benefit of others.\footnote{Ibid., 365.} While the followers of Yasser Arafat sought to protect themselves with an appeal to Palestinian nationalism, Sadat’s diplomacy with Israel brought relations closer to the realm of normal politics and transformed the conflict by accepting Israel’s existence as a state.\footnote{Ajami, “The End of Pan-Arabism,” 368.} Sadat also transformed official narratives following Nasser’s death; appeals to Arab unity were limited to Arab economic unity.\footnote{Laurie Brand, Official Stories: Politics and National Narratives in Egypt and Algeria (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 81.} This was likely in response to the economic problems Egypt was experiencing in the 1970s as war with Israel frightened investors and state borrowing, to finance both the war and domestic employment, caused unsustainable levels of inflation.\footnote{Ibid., 82.} Ending the conflict with Israel was the most efficient way for Sadat to free Egyptian state resources and focus on remediating the domestic economic crisis.\footnote{Nafaa, “Arab Nationalism,” 136.} The October War in 1973 finally gave Sadat the opportunity to break with Arab nationalism and take Egypt out of other Arabs’ fights.\footnote{Ajami, “The End of Pan-Arabism,” 368.} In addition to the rise of these pressing domestic concerns, the issues that were once the glue of Arab nationalism became less and less relevant with time, until they no longer sufficed to outweigh state interests.\footnote{Ibid., 361-2.} As a unifying ideology, Arab nationalism helped Arabs achieve their political aims even when state governments otherwise lacked legitimacy and helped groups of Arabs overcome their differences when they faced a common external threat. For example, Arab nationalism accelerated when the masses rallied against European colonialism.\footnote{Ibid., 82.} Anti-colonialism once unified the Arabs, especially in their shared outrage surrounding documents like the Balfour Declaration and the Sykes-Picot Agreement.\footnote{Nafaa, “Arab Nationalism,” 136.}
After 1962, however, the formal French and British assault on Arab independence had come to an end.\textsuperscript{50} Once anti-colonialism ceased to be the primary political objective of the Arabs, an important element of their shared experience diminished.\textsuperscript{51} Ajami refers to this as the end of a “collective Arab crisis.”\textsuperscript{52}

In addition to the decline of colonialism, Ajami highlights the role of several other unifying factors whose influence diminished over time. The first is Ottoman universalism. According to Ajami, the universalism of pan-Arab ideologies is drawn from the universalism of the Ottoman system.\textsuperscript{53} Ajami argues that pan-Arab universalism was a response to the nationalism of the Young Turk movement and that since the “Ottoman experience has been committed to history,” the matter is no longer relevant.\textsuperscript{54} The other diminishing influence is that of charismatic leaders such as Gamal Abdel Nasser.\textsuperscript{55} Ajami credits Nasser for bringing pan-Arabism to the masses, and cites his death in 1970 as the point at which the “nationalist fervour” yielded to “a coming to the fore of economic issues and demands, of problems that do not lend themselves to solo performance, to the magic touch of charisma.”\textsuperscript{56}

In his response to Ajami’s work on the apparent demise of pan-Arabism, Nafaa criticizes Ajami’s emphasis on both the antagonisms between state nationalisms in the Arab world and the incompatibility between pan-Arabism and state nationalisms.\textsuperscript{57} Nafaa argues that local nationalisms and pan-Arabism are compatible because they have similar objectives: both seek for the independence of a given community from external control.\textsuperscript{58} Nafaa also suggests that states seeking independence as a part of a broader movement are more likely to support the independence claims of similarly situated states. As the states in the Arab world faced the struggle against colonialism, states building their own domestic national movements for independence were also interested in supporting other aspiring independent states in their national struggles.\textsuperscript{59} Nafaa argues that any strife between the Arab states following independence was “of the same nature as the crisis within every nationalist movement in the aftermath of independence: the social questions surface along with the ideological differences hidden by the exigencies of unity against the common enemy.”\textsuperscript{60}

Nafaa also criticizes Ajami’s treatment of the end of formal colonialism. According to Nafaa, Ajami focuses on the end of formal colonialism as a blow to Arab nationalism but fails to consider how the modern structures that have replaced colonialism might give cause for the ideology to retain its usefulness.\textsuperscript{61} Pan-Arabism can still be a defense from Western “imperialism, hegemonic pretensions, and economic exploitation.”\textsuperscript{62} To illustrate this point, Nafaa refers to the differences between Nasser’s policies — which sought economic independence, alienated the United States, and focused heavily on Arab political unity — and Sadat’s policies, which moved away from socialism, led to a rapprochement with the United States, and led to the withdrawal of Egypt from Arab nationalism.\textsuperscript{63} On a similar note, Ajami’s assertion that Israel ceased to represent a threat to all Arab states after Sadat’s diplomacy is contested.\textsuperscript{64} While Ajami cites this as the moment when Egypt and Palestine both looked away from pan-Arabism in earnest,
Nafaa holds that Israel still posed a threat worth rallying around.\textsuperscript{65} When discussing this point in history, it becomes especially important to delineate between pan-Arabism, Arabism, and Arab nationalism. Dawisha delineates between Arabism and Pan-Arabism, explaining that, in addition to being distinct from Arab nationalism, the two concepts are also distinct from each other. While Arabism is described as a term referring to shared language and cultural heritage, pan-Arabism is more of a political term, a “doctrine of Arab political unity” that does not require the call for single sovereign statehood.\textsuperscript{66} While Arab nationalism contains an element of territoriality, Arabism refers exclusively to the “linguistic, religious, historical, and emotional bonds that tie the Arabic-speaking people to each other,” in what Dawisha calls their “cultural uniformity.”\textsuperscript{67}

It is also important to delineate the sentiments of nationalism that are not reflected in any state policy, held by various publics, from the appeals to nationalisms that emanate from state authorities and leaders. Nafaa mentions the role of the people in nourishing pan-Arabism as an idea. He cites a study in which over 5000 Arabs from different states were shown to have the strong belief that there should be at least some kind of coordination of policy between the Arab states, with roughly 60 percent favouring the idea of a federal Arab state that would have a joint military, shared foreign policy, and in which everything else would remain separate.\textsuperscript{68} This study was conducted by the American University in Cairo in 1980, a time when Arab nationalism was apparently on the decline.\textsuperscript{69} It is difficult to ascertain with any surety what the public truly feels about different nationalisms and other ideologies truly are, but it is important to bear in mind that the opinions and identities held by the public may eventually be mobilized for political purposes nonetheless, even after being eclipsed by more powerful claims or categories. While the claim for a single Arab state may have ceased to be a politically operational concept, what Nafaa refers to as the “immortal function” of pan-Arabism may have survived the turn of the twenty-first century intact.\textsuperscript{70} This is the cultural construct – the sense of a common identity and belonging to a community with a shared history – that unifies Arabs without an accompanying territorial element.

Both Nafaa and Ajami take a highly state-centric approach to pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism, which is why both authors miss a valuable opportunity to engage with the role of people and other non-state actors in shaping movements to unify Arabs. Ajami reports the rumour that Kissinger said that he could not “deal with latent intangible forces,” nor could anyone “negotiate with an idea.”\textsuperscript{71} While it is true that no one can negotiate with an idea, it is also true that ideas, expressed with skill, can bring people together or drive them apart. Individuals’ ideas about who they are, and about what constitutes the nations and states to which they belong, shape how they behave and how they can be mobilized to change their political environment. Nafaa also makes a brief but important point about the potential for disconnection between the leaders of a state and the people:

[T]he positions of the heads of Arab states made them the legal voices of local nationalism. But in a state where democracy is absent and institutions are dead, it would be inexact and simplistic to identify the heads of states with separate nationalisms. A gap between the political positions of the heads of states and nationalism inspiration could exist.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 147.
\textsuperscript{66} Dawisha, Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century, 11.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{68} Nafaa, “Arab Nationalism,” 145.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 145.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 139.
\textsuperscript{71} Ajami, “The End of Pan-Arabism,” 356.
\textsuperscript{72} Nafaa, “Arab Nationalism,” 141.
Nafaa suggests that whenever the interests of a state conflict with pan-Arabism, this deviation might be traceable to the whims or regime maintenance concerns of an individual dictator or royal family.\footnote{Ibid., 150.} This is an interesting position: Nafaa apparently sees no reason why the legitimate will of the people would sway a state away from pan-Arabism.\footnote{Ibid., 150.} Taking the example of Egypt, Nafaa explains that Egypt is the natural leader of the pan-Arab system and so has nothing to fear from pan-Arabism. In fact, an Egyptian leader could use pan-Arabism to “disrupt the local systems of other components of the pan-Arab system.”\footnote{Ibid., 150.} At the same time, Nafaa asserts that Egypt’s “defection from the Arab system makes her a more vulnerable and easily manipulable chess piece in the game of American strategic policies.”\footnote{Ibid., 150.}

Today’s Arabism: Not for Nation-States

Several decades after the death of Nasser, a few scholars who had inspected the remains of the politically dead ideology found “New Arabism,” an ideology driven by mass media, always seeking regional appeal, and by cosmopolitan intellectuals looking for political alternatives (280). In a 2011 article for *Al-Jazeera*, Lamis Andoni explores the possibilities for a resurrection of pan-Arabism through the Arab Spring movement.\footnote{Lamis Adoni, “The resurrection of pan-Arabism,” *Al-Jazeera*, February 11, 2011, accessed October 26, 2016, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/02/201112115231647934.html.} She argues that pan-Arabism was not an ideology for nations – or even for states – any longer. Instead, it is a way for people around the world who identify as Arabs to find coherence in their present-day struggles and show solidarity for one another. Photographs of Nasser accompanied solidarity protests in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world, which suggests that the 2011 protesters drew some parallels between their movement and the one that Nasser symbolizes. Andoni argues that there are several key differences between the Arabism of Nasser’s day and the 2011 movement: “Then, pan-Arabism was a direct response to Western domination and the 1948 establishment of the state of Israel. Today, it is a reaction to the absence of democratic freedoms and the inequitable distribution of wealth across the Arab world.” Andoni suggests that the protests are representative of a movement that “transcends narrow nationalism” and aims to check the often-authoritarian power that many regimes in the Arab world have accumulated through appeals to nationalism or Arab unity, or by rallying against a common enemy such as Israel.

Unlike Arab nationalism, this movement does not come with a territorial claim — though in some ways it is a reclaiming of the state by the people. Unlike the Arabism of the past, it is not a response to direct Western domination or even a protest of less visible means of Western influence. It is not a response to the encroaching threat of Zionism or a call for military interventions against Israel. Rather, the Arabism of the Arab Spring movement carries the peoples’ demands for a more equitable distribution of wealth and for the fulfilment of democratic freedoms: it is a demand upon domestic regimes in the Arab world for freedom from repression and dictatorship.

Andoni highlights the protesters’ concerns about the oppressive regimes who appeal to common causes like Palestine and other external threats to the Arab world to justify “maintaining martial laws and silencing dissent.” Even Fatah and Hamas are not excused, despite not being state leaders; these protests, according to Andoni, represent an understanding that addressing injustice within Arab states “is a prerequisite for the struggle to end Israeli occupation and not something to be
endured for the sake of that struggle.” It is perhaps an attempt to close the gap between state nationalism and the sentiment of the people, as mentioned by Nafaa.

The target of political claims for recognition of rights (and, in a sense, personhood – once national, now individual) has changed over time. In the mid-twentieth century, it was Western powers like Britain or France. Now, it is the leaders that for many years have tried to justify or sideline their own oppressive behaviours by highlighting their alignment with movements for self-governance. There was a certain hypocrisy in fighting for national liberation while repressing the people who were ostensibly supposed to benefit from independence, and today’s pan-Arabism, the new Arab unity, is a step toward resolving that inconsistency. The Arab Spring movement has shown that calls for Arab unity can be politically useful again: not as a tool to combat foreign dominance, but rather as a mechanism to lend coherence to popular demands for rights.

Works Cited


Empire has for centuries provided a backdrop to Arab history. Zeinab Abul-Magd’s *Imagined Empires: A History of Revolt in Egypt* provides a topical examination of revolt against empire by marginalized, subaltern groups. Abul-Magd’s narrative focuses on the Upper Egyptian province of Qina – a place often found in the periphery in the historiography of imperialism in Egypt – but treated here as a center of revolt against empire. While Abul Magd’s analysis of the effects of empire on subaltern groups is compelling and avoids a romantic view of Egyptian nationalism by refusing to take a classist approach to the development of the nation-state, her argument that the success of empire may be measured by the reactions of subaltern groups fails to be persuasive. Rather it fails due to her assumptions regarding the nature and goals of empire, and her overemphasis on the agency of subaltern groups.

Abul-Magd studies empires in Qina Province by analyzing: their hegemonic policies; environmental, social and economic impacts; and the local responses to their presence. She argues against the assumption that empires in Egypt were successful and spurred the rise of a universal national identity and nation-state. The Ottoman Empire (1500-1800), French Empire (1798-1801), Muhammad Ali Pasha’s Khedival Empire (1805-1848), the informal (1848-1882) and formal British Empires (1882-1950), as well as the informal American Empire of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century all provide the backdrop for her analysis of imperialism and “non-nationalist” rebellion. Abul-Magd employs Marxist, dependency, world-system, postcolonial and subaltern studies approaches to argue that these empires may be deemed “imagined,” meaning that how they are interpreted today, particularly in terms of their effectiveness, is a result of historians’ and the ruling class’s perception of themselves and their colonies, rather than a historical truth accepted by its subjects such as those in Qina Province. This notion of “imagined empires” is inspired by Benedict Anderson’s theory of “imagined communities,” which argues that nations are the inventions of colonized elites that used capitalism to forge national identities. Similarly, Abul-Magd argues that both empire and the Egyptian nation are the result of the perceptions of imperial and local elites, and thus are not universally applicable to subaltern groups such as peasants, women, and religious minorities. Abul-Magd focuses on the inability of empires to provide political and economic agency to Qina Province, as well as the correlation between empire and disease, as evidence of the failure of empires that systematically led to resistance and rebellion by these subaltern groups. She concludes by arguing that this historical pattern of subaltern revolt against imperial failure may be applied to American cultural and economic imperialism in Egypt and their relevance to the Arab Spring.

---

1 Abul-Magd, p. 3-4
2 Ibid, p. 3
3 Abul-Magd, p. 8
While Abul-Magd’s *Imagined Empires* understandably emphasizes the analysis of empire, it is in fact her analysis of the development of the Egyptian nation-state as a classist – not populist or romantic – response to imperialism that is the most compelling. Romantic nationalism regards the nation as a pre-existing entity. This is in contrast to Anderson's view of the nation as an imagined community – implying that the nation is created by the state and not vice-versa. Abul-Magd argues that the Egyptian nation-state is not a product of popular resistance to imperialism, as is often presumed by historians. For example, Eugene Rogan emphasizes that the development of Arab nationalism in the early twentieth century as a response to Ottoman Turkification and imperialism. Rather nationalism was produced by the elites’ efforts to maneuver themselves into positions with the most influence, often at the expense of their fellow nationals. In sum, Abul-Magd argues that nation-states are not necessarily produced by a nation reacting to empire, but rather by elites propagating nationalism through state institutions that may in fact be encouraged by empire. For example, she argues that so-called “nationalist” institutions such as the Council of Consultation of Representatives formed by Khedive Ismail in 1886 were not nationalist but elitist and statist, suiting the needs of the Delta and Cairo landowners. This was done at the calculated expense of Upper Egypt and included sabotaging of irrigation infrastructure and introducing tax reforms that would put Upper Egypt on similar footing to the elites. Additionally, instead of seeing nationalism as an undifferentiated resistance to empire, the author provides evidence that the British under Lord Cromer in Egypt encouraged nationalism as a means of distancing Egypt from the Ottoman Empire, as well as to discourage a “Muslim” identity.

Abul-Magd’s argument about nationalism as an elitist response, rather than a method of resistance to empire, is evidenced by the contemporaneous formation of other Arab states. For example, a national identity did not exist in Transjordan prior to its formation by the British following the First World War. Unlike Egypt, there existed no sense of territorial homeland, no shared historical experience, and no sense of insiders versus outsiders that could contribute to the natural birth of a national identity. Nonetheless, Hijazi King Abdullah managed to forge a national identity by emphasizing Bedouin imagery, historical imagery using Petra, the Islamic roots of the royal Hashemite family, and Arabism to legitimize the Transjordanian nation-state. However, similar to Upper Egypt, this nation-state was initially incurred at the expense of native Transjordanians such as Awda al-Qusus who resented the Arab Istiqlalis who controlled the Transjordanian government. Nationalism was built by elites and state institutions often at the expense of locals or subaltern groups, in contrast to the romantic nationalist view that nations produce states, thus giving credence to Abul-Magd’s interpretation of the nation-state.

While a sideshow to her analysis of empire, Abul-Magd’s discussion of the social history of Upper Egypt and Qina Province also inadvertently supports her perception that the Egyptian nation-state, and consequently other Arab nation-states, were elitist movements built on existing state institutions rather than a nationalist movement. If nationalism rests on a sense of territorial homeland, shared historical experience, and notion of insider versus outsider, then Upper Egypt should have been able to develop a nationalist movement, which, given the

---

5 Reilly, “Transjordan under the British Mandate,” March 17th, 2016
6 Rogan, p. 147-148
7 Abul-Magd, p. 125-130
8 Ibid, p. 130-131
9 Reilly, March 17th, 2016
10 Ibid, March 17th, 2016
11 Rogan, p. 184-185
romantic nationalist perspective, could have led to statehood. As Abul-Magd’s examination of plague makes clear, Upper Egypt is geographically distinct from Lower Egypt due to its dryer and hotter weather, and greater prevalence of desert than in the wetter Delta. 12 Historically, Upper Egypt has also been geographically distinct since the time of the ancient Egyptians and until the Ottomans when it was a distinct polity from Lower Egypt, ruled by the Arab Hawwara. 13 These distinctions give Upper Egypt a unique, shared historical experience. Particularly the example of Arab self-governance – wherein peasants, regardless of religious affiliation – were given significant political agency was unseen in Lower Egypt. 14 The symbol of banditry in Upper Egypt has also almost transcended history to myth, with figures such as the bandit al-Khutt acting as symbols of a nationalist fight against oppression. 15

The distinction between insiders and outsiders is difficult to discern in Upper Egypt, as it is not a homogenous population, but rather a combination of Arab Muslims and Coptic Christians. Nonetheless, Abul-Magd conveys a separation between the populations of Upper and Lower Egypt. In regards to the Egyptian nationalist movement in the late nineteenth century she writes, “Qina’s subaltern women and men could not possibly identify with these patriotic discourses or struggles. For them, the hegemonic north and corrupt local elite afflicted them with poverty and killed them with recurring epidemics. Thus, they embarked on their own liberating struggles against the colonizer and the nationalistic elite alike.” 16 Despite the caveats of nationalism such as distinct territorial homeland, historical symbols and sense of insiders versus outsiders, as well as significant imperial oppression, there developed no prevailing Upper Egyptian nationalist movement. This supports Abul-Magd’s general view of the nation-state: an Upper Egyptian nation-state did not develop because it did not suit the interests of the elites.

Although Abul-Magd’s argument about the nation-states as an elitist project is persuasive, her claim that the effectiveness of empire is measurable through the reaction of subaltern groups falls short. As previously stated, Abul-Magd argues that empire in Upper Egypt is largely “imagined” by historians’ and the ruling classes perception of themselves. Excluded from their narrative are subaltern groups and their perceptions of their colonizers. While she convincingly argues that none of the five empires she analyzes fully succeeded in assimilating the people of Upper Egypt into their empire, she fails to be persuasive in her claim that analyzing empires from the perspective of subalterns is the best vantage from which to theorize empire.

The first issue with Abul-Magd’s concept of imagined empires is her assumptions regarding the nature of empire. In choosing to analyze the Ottoman, French, Khedival and British Empires, Abul-Magd makes no theoretical distinction between non-national dynastic empires and colonial empires, and their different theoretical bases that may cause their effects on subaltern groups to be interpreted differently. Instead, she argues that empires in Qina Province all followed a generic pattern of intervention, particularly in the form of modernization, resulting in plague and destitution, and thereafter, leading to subaltern revolt. This narrative is reiterated, regardless of the differing goals and systems of each empire. Abul-Magd overlooks critical differences between two types of empire in her blanket analysis. Whereas the Ottoman Empire may be deemed a non-national dynastic empire, the French and British Empires and even Muhammad Ali Pasha’s Empire, were colonial. Muhammad Ali Pasha’s Empire

12 Abul-Magd, p. 49
13 Ibid, p. 19
14 Ibid, p. 23
15 Ibid, p. 154
16 Ibid, p. 140
is considered colonial based on the theory of “internal colonialism,” meaning that it economically exploited an internal province to expand externally. Blanket analysis. Whereas the Ottoman Empire may be deemed a non-national dynastic empire, the French and British Empires and even Muhammad Ali Pasha’s Empire, were colonial. Muhammad Ali Pasha’s Empire is considered colonial based on the theory of “internal colonialism,” meaning that it economically exploited an internal province to expand externally. As a non-national dynastic empire, the Ottoman Empire is particularly out of place in Abul-Magd’s theoretical take on empire, thereby undermining the applicability of her argument to other empires in Middle Eastern history. One crucial difference between it and the other examples of empire is that, although the Ottoman Empire changed the governing system in Upper Egypt and Qina Province throughout its rule from a two-state to one-state system, it made no attempt to “modernize” Qina based on ethnic and cultural differences – a fact the author claims is essential to her analysis of the overlooked failure of empires. In contrast, the French, Khedival and British Empires all attempted modernization ventures in Qina. According to Abul-Magd, the French Empire entered Egypt in part due to economic interests and political competition with Britain, but also in order to “liberate” colonies by modelling them after the newly founded French Republic, believing Egypt to be a backwards country in need of enlightenment. Similarly, Muhammad Ali’s Ottoman-Turkish Empire “modernized” Upper Egypt’s political and economic systems through a legislative council, modernized bureaucracy and reformed court system that taxed Upper Egypt without allowing them representation. Finally, the British both informally and formally attempted modernization, such as through influencing Khedive Ismail to change the Sharia legal code on private property to imitate that of the British, and through capitalist ventures such as the agricultural bank and Anglo-French sugar company. Unlike the Ottoman Empire in Egypt, the three colonial empires attempted modernization due to ethnic differences. While their efforts failed, thus supporting Abul-Magd’s critical analysis of empire, their attempts at modernization through colonization distinguish them from non-national dynastic empires, thereby undermining the universal applicability of Abul-Magd’s argument for “imagined” empires outside of a colonial setting.

Conversely, Abul-Magd also undermines her argument that empire may be evaluated based on its acceptance by subaltern groups by focusing too much on the failures of colonial empires without accounting for their imperialist goals. Abul-Magd frames failure as being whenever a colonial empire fails to account for the interests of subaltern groups and is met with revolt, rather than failure being whenever empires are unable to satisfy their own interests, even if at the expense of subaltern groups. While this may be true for non-national dynastic empires, since unlike colonial empires they depend far more on formal territorial rather than informal social or economic control, a revolt by disenfranchised colonial subjects does not necessarily constitute a failure for a colonial empire unless it is detrimental to its interests. This is a more accurate understanding of the goals of empire. For example, Abul-Magd argues that, “In the mid-nineteenth century, Britain was far from being a successful informal empire in Upper Egypt. Britain attempted but never penetrated Upper Egypt or was in any way close to domination there. The empire’s main market measures failed because the discontented subalterns of the south fundamentally resented them.”

17 Abul-Magd, p. 71
18 Ibid, p. 3
19 Ibid, p. 47, 53-54
20 Ibid, p. 87
21 Abul-Magd, p. 114-115, 131
22 Abul-Magd, p. 121
However, while it may have been a humanitarian failure with little economic success for the people of Qina, the British nonetheless expanded their ideology of free trade and profited off exploiting low prices for Egyptian grain. From a British perspective, it is thus possible to argue that both its informal and formal empires were successful since they at least partially achieved its political and economic colonial goals, since improving the lot of subaltern groups was not essential to its aims of empire. Since Abul-Magd does not account for this perspective of the goals of empires, she fails to convincingly argue that her theory of “imagined” empires is indeed an innovative lens with which to analyze empire.

Lastly, Abul-Magd’s argument for the importance of considering subaltern groups when analyzing the success of empire is unconvincing due to her overemphasis of the agency of these groups. Abul-Magd emphasizes the significance of subaltern groups revolting against empire; however at no point does she articulate a clear political change brought about by these revolts. Her closest example of a revolt leading to regime change occurred on the eve of the eighteenth century, when Upper Egyptian peasants revolted against the ruling Hawwara family and forced them to flee, only for them to be reinstated by the Ottoman Sultan. While many of the revolts described by Abul-Magd indeed disrupted the ruling establishment, such as the 1820 revolt against Muhammad Ali Pasha that saw Ahmad al-Salah briefly declare himself governor of Qina and Qus, none came close to truly providing the subaltern groups of Upper Egypt the agency needed to support Abul-Magd’s claim that empire was undermined by subaltern revolt. While she succinctly argues that Upper Egypt indeed possesses a history and tradition of revolt, Abul-Magd thus fails to convincingly argue that analyzing the effects of empire on subaltern groups is necessary for understanding the success of empire in the Middle East and beyond.

Abul-Magd’s Imagined Empires offers a persuasive argument for the rise of nation-states as elitist movements rather than populist responses to oppression, evidenced by how empires try to support nationalism, the case study of elitist nationalism in Transjordan, and the lack of development of an Upper Egyptian nationalist movement. However, her argument that the effectiveness of empires should be judged based on the reactions of subaltern groups is less persuasive, since she does not distinguish between the nature and goals of empire, and places too much emphasis on subaltern agency. Abul-Magd concludes by applying her theories of empire, the nation-state and revolt in Upper Egypt to the United States’ informal empire propagated by economic development and the Washington Consensus. While the accompanying Arab Spring supports her perception of imperial failure leading to revolt, it is unlikely that revolt in Upper Egypt will cause any long-lasting detriment to the American Empire, nor result in the rise of an Upper Egyptian nation-state.

23 Ibid, p. 98-99
24 Ibid, p. 29
25 Ibid, p. 78
Works Cited


Modern Amazigh Identity Discourses in Morocco

Judy Androsoff

Political questions and conflicts regarding ethnicity and language have become a hallmark of many newly independent countries in post-colonial Africa and Asia. The Maghreb in North Africa is no exception, but ethnicity only became a noteworthy political subject in the “generation after independence, rather than in its immediate aftermath.”1, 2 The Berbers or Imazighen3 represent the “indigenous population of the North African region, where they have resided for over four thousand years, comprising nearly fifty percent of Morocco’s population and twenty-five percent of Algeria.”4 The case of the Imazighen is an illustration of a broader North African issue: the contentious articulation of a ‘minority’ identity in the postcolonial nation-state. The Berber ‘minority’ claim to be descendants of the Maghreb’s ‘original’ inhabitants in a way that the ‘majorities,’ allegedly, are not.5 Intrinsic to Maghrebi society and culture, Amazigh are struggling for a bolstered presence within their respective nation’s national narrative. Like many indigenous groups that have withstood centuries of capitulation and surrender, North Africa’s Berbers are seeking cultural and linguistic recognition as well as retribution for injustices served, especially in the post-independence era. Berbers are asserting “cultural and political demands through an increasingly vocal Pan-Amazigh movement, which also calls for greater political pluralism.”6 Modern Berber movements have emerged because of their ongoing struggle to win cultural and linguistic recognition and respect within their corresponding, hegemonic Arab nationalist and Islamic-centered states.7, 8

The Amazigh cultural movement that has emerged since 19949 is a multifaceted, and often contentious phenomenon — within its movement and with external political actors. Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, a research fellow at Tel Aviv University, specializing in Maghrebi political identity studies, states that as with most ethno-national projects, “the elaboration and dissemination of modern Berber identity has been accompanied by the fashioning of a memory community, both in North Africa and within the Berber diaspora.”10 This involves seeking an appropriate or instrumental past, and when ‘found,’ to consecrate it in new discourse, collective commemorations, and rituals. Shared memories are as fundamental to the continuity of a collective cultural identity as is the sense of a common destiny.

1 Michael J. Willis, Power and Politics in the Maghreb: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco from Independence to the Arab Spring (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 203.
2 Ethnicity is demarcated by a common language, culture, historiography as well as ancestral experiences.
3 Berbers refer to themselves as Imazighen. Amazigh is singular. “Berber” is deemed pejorative, stemming from the Romans who labeled them barbaroi or barbaric. Tamazight refers to Berber languages of which there are numerous dialects spoken throughout the Maghreb.
5 Like the Copts in Egypt or the Maronites in Lebanon.
7 Most Berbers are observant Muslims. Their conflict is not with Islam but more with linguistic imperialism.
8 In the early days of independence, Istiqlal (Morocco’s party of liberation) and the Monarchy were not willing to give the Amazigh their due.
9 1994 represents a political shift or thaw from Morocco’s King Hassan when he entertained the idea of having Tamazight taught in schools. It would not come to fruition until 2003 when his predecessor and son, King Muhammad VI, issued a Royal Dahir.
This paper will discuss the historical contributions to Berber identity construction, highlighting key periods and events that have come to shape the collective memory and modern Berber identity in the Maghreb, paying particular attention to Morocco. North Africa, and in this case Morocco, has many historical environments to consider for Berbers searching a usable past. The recapturing and advocacy of an accurate Berber history and memory require a sizeable degree of myth-making and essentializing of the Berber spirit. Promoting culture and a continuity of Amazigh language are paramount, as is the existence of an imagined geography or temporal space. The more success in the course of remembering, recouping and inventing Berber history, the greater the significance for the entirety of Moroccan society. Examining the current progress and challenges of Amazigh cultural workers in Morocco will demonstrate the enormity of their undertaking: reclaiming and rewriting history on their terms, creating a new discourse in an Arabo-Islamic landscape and renegotiating the balance between Arab nationalism and Berber identity in a pluralist nation-state.

The reopening of North African history to include Berbers challenges and disputes the official history disseminated by current North African states and the larger Arab-Islamic backdrop to which Berbers belong. Katherine Hoffman from Northwestern University explains the past dearth of scholarship in this area. For over fifty years, ideas about Berber particularism or distinctness were constructed by colonial strategies, literature and policies. Post-colonial academics, wanting to distance themselves from racialized French scholarship, were understandably apprehensive about sustaining colonial stereotypes, which demonized Arabs and Islam. Emphasizing a Berber “uniqueness drove researchers away from Berber topics and toward the safer ideological program of Arabo-Islamism.” When Morocco asserted Arabic as its ‘official language’ in 1956, Berber speakers concealed, rebuffed and even abandoned their Amazigh culture and ancestry by shifting their language use away from Berber to dialectal Arabic. The acceleration of rural-to-urban Berber migration further reduced the number of Tamazight speakers who also began to lose touch with their indigenous communities. The post-colonial processes of state-building and the Arabization of language, education, and media prohibited Berber culture and language from finding its place in the public sphere. “This adverse environment inhibited the academic study of Berber-related topics.” Non-Arab components of North African society and culture received even less attention during the Cold War. Fortunately for scholarship and Berbers, discourse and knowledge production have progressed over the last twenty years, with fresh ideas and insights regarding the Amazigh project.

Today, along with the growing literature in this field of study, “websites and blogs now carry information on Berber matters in several languages. Internet discussion groups, like Amazigh-Net, are alive with debates about Amazigh consciousness and the place of Imazighen in Maghrebi history and society.” In Morocco, Tamazight writings have shifted from academia to include more popularized books of poetry, literature and children’s books. Music recordings and video reproductions featuring Berber culture are also lucrative and burgeoning enterprise. “Since the political openness of 1994, Amazigh cultural associations outside of Rabat (the capital) have proliferated.” There is a current internet

---

12 Morocco officially declared itself an Arab-Islamic state in 1962 when the constitution was written. However, Arab-Islamic hegemony was in play shortly after independence – March 9, 1956.
13 Migration essentially created two Moroccos: the mountainous rural Berber Morocco and the urban Arab Morocco. Urban and Arab biases also constructed Tamazight as a backward dialect.
14 This linguistic imperialism also rings true for English, French, Spanish, and other “killer languages” that drove many indigenous languages to extinction.
15 Hoffman and Miller, Berbers and Others, 3.
16 This academic drought ended in 1996 with the publication of the first English scholarly book on Berbers by Michael Brett and Elizabeth Fentress called The Berbers.
18 Ibid., 118.
campaign lobbying Google Translate to integrate Tamazight into its software to accommodate the demands of the national and transnational Berber community. A revival of cultural performances is renewing oral traditions, and highlighting the “conflicts of contemporary Moroccan identity torn between globalization and conservatism.” This Amazigh renaissance has produced a deluge of compelling declarations and manifestos “about who they are and why it matters. Imazighen are writing and situating themselves into the histories they insist have overlooked or misrepresented them.”

The task of Berber memory work is daunting. Over the course of history in North Africa, Berbers “have straddled multiple worlds; they have been multilingual and always part of the ‘other,’ engaged in one form of accommodation or another with stronger, more advanced civilizations.” In nearly all recorded histories, Berbers have been characterized as barbaric and savage, requiring a “civilizing hand.” They are particularly weighed down by the “legacy of Islamic history, which provided them with an Eastern and Arab ‘origin myth’ that legitimized their inclusion in the ummah, albeit as a primitive community requiring Islamic faith to justify their mission and assumption of power.” Recovering pre-Islamic history is complicated and tedious as Berbers were mostly an oral culture. The scarcity of written Tamazight text places memory work at a disadvantage, making it difficult to negate pejorative dominant Arab nationalist discourses.

Berbers insist they have resided in North Africa for a very long time. Mohammed Chafik, a leading Amazigh activist from Rabat, claims “Imazighen have inhabited North Africa for thirty-three centuries.” One of the central objectives of Amazigh activism and memory work is to counter the dominant national narrative, by affirmation of “North Africa’s historical Amazigh, and not Arab, identity.” Chafik maintains that embracing pre-Islamic history allows for bonding with the past, thus widening the Amazigh sense of cultural identity. Imazighen stress that they have more than just a single history and highlight their pre-Islamic past where they were not “merely voiceless, nameless foot soldiers and illiterate tribesmen.”

Both Amazigh intellectuals and memory workers emphasize that “Islamisation did not sweep through an empty landscape, but rather was layered with other forms of political, social and cultural identity in the region.”

The Islamization of Berbers was not the end of their story as it did not marginalize their identity, “nor fringe it to a perfect state.” In the Amazigh’s historical imagination, Islam’s seventh-century arrival in North Africa did not devastate previous Berber institutions; instead, it was integrated into a vibrant Berber culture, adopting Islam into their beliefs and customs. Over time, however, Islam would profoundly influence nearly every facet of their lives.

Amazigh Origin Myths

Maya Schatzmiller, a medieval historian at Western University, writes that

19 Facebook has already made this linguistic accommodation for Berbers.
21 Crawford and Hoffman, Essentially Amazigh, 119.
24 Crawford and Hoffman, The Maghrib, 55.
25 For example, Arab nationalist Rachid Idrissi combatively asserts that Berbers began to have a collective memory when they learned to write in Arabic, as part of the ummah.
27 Berber intellectuals like Chafik seek to redefine Maghrebi collective memory and identity by re-historicizing Moroccan Berber’s pre-Islamic past, dating back to the Romans, Greeks, Carthaginians and even Pharaonic Egypt.
28 Cornwall and Aria, “Imaginative Geographies,” 256.
30 Cornwall and Aria, “Imaginative Geographies,” 258.
31 Maddy-Weitzman, The Maghrib, 52.
32 If there was any semblance of a collective memory of the pre-Islamic epochs among the Berber populations, it disappeared. Moroccan history, as it appears in official education curriculum, is nationalist/dynastic incorporating Moroccan historical experience beginning with the arrival of Islam in 788 AD, the establishment of the Idrisid Dynasty, Idris being a descendent of Mohammad.
Berbers were not immediately aware that they were becoming part of the Islamic ‘universe’ in the seventh century. The did not “succumb to the Arab conquest without a fight and the initial conquest was followed by a period of Berber resistance both to Islam and to Arab political dominance.”33, 34 Despite the slow and uneven linguistic, cultural, and religious assimilation over centuries, there is a simultaneous contestation to the Arabization of North Africa. It was not until the thirteenth century Marinid Dynasty that Berbers were brought into the mainstream of “Islamic statehood through bilingual practices and the introduction of Islamic norms and institutions.”35 but even this did not indicate a mass cultural-linguistic acculturation. The ‘process’ was one of “interaction and resistance, creativity and digression, evolution and disruption, a continuous process of negotiation between the individual and society over identity and state power.”36

Concurrently, there was the “development and chronicling of the myth of Berbers’ Arab origin,”37 during two specific medieval periods, by three different ‘schools’ from distinct Islamic regions.38 Based on sources used by Ibn Khaladun, Schatzmiller, provides us with two consecutive periods in myth development. The first period from the ninth to the twelfth century, and the second from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries.39 Within the first period, there was much debate among Arabs regarding Berber origin, with no shortage of postulation. Historians and geographers from the East, during the Abbasid empire, grappled with the historical invisibility of the Berbers.40 Arab genealogies were fabricated to safeguard social status and material advantages to justify the usurpation of power, or to legitimize political action. The Berbers did not leave a family tree, written texts, oral traditions or any other cultural articulations in Amazigh authenticating their existence or proving a myth of origin in the Maghreb. But, a Berber myth of origin existed well before the Arab chroniclers provided them with one.

Schatzmiller states, “politics over Berber origins were bound up from the onset of extant political issues.”41 Countless Berber-led revolts, starting in 740, against Islamic authorities prompted an abundance of forged hadiths lambasting Berbers as duplicitous enemies of Islam.42 Schatzmiller links these tirades to ethnic tensions in tenth-century Andalusia, where Arabs perceived Berbers as al-fitna al-barbariyya (quarrelsome warriors). The denial by Arab-Andalusian genealogists, during this period, of the Berbers’ Arab Eastern origin myth in favor of a Western, Iberian origin43 demonstrates the hostility and desire of the former to block the sharing of political, economic and social power by Berber groups, who they accused of shu’ubiyya.44 A local Iberian origin narrative was proffered by a rival ethnic group to prevent the Berber community from sharing power, demonstrates the political

Although Berbers are subsumed in this history, they carry some standing as the Idrisids are known to have married Berber women, a tradition that carried through to King Hassan II in 1960. His son and current king, Mohammed VI has broken away from this tradition. The point here is that this is one of many markers upon which Berbers derive nation-myth making.

34 Pre-Islamic Berber religions rested on pagan beliefs and deities often developed locally and through time were influenced through contact with traditional African religions, Judaism and Christianity.
35 Schatzmiller, The Islamic State, p. 25. Islamic reforms such as the waqf land reform and the madrasa were adopted.
36 Schatzmiller, The Islamic State, 17.
37 Ibid., 25.
38 Ibid., 21. These schools, comprised of historians and genealogists succeeded one another in chronological order. The East named after the academics who lived there ceded its place to the Andalusian school based in Muslim Spain. A third one, the Ifriqiya school, was based in the Maghreb, completed the first phase in the chronological history of the myth of the Berbers’ Arab origin. It should be noted that these various schools of Berber origin myths disagreed on their origin and thus, their narratives and historiography became competitive.
39 Ibid., 22. In the 9th century, there were several small Berber dynasties but the Berber-Islamic Almoravid dynasty assumed power in the eleventh century, continuing with the Almohads in the twelfth and the Marinids in the thirteenth century.
40 Maddy-Weitzman, The Berber Identity, 6. The genealogy of the myth of the Berbers’ origin in the East occurred because the relationship between center and periphery in the Islamic empire was changing. For Arab historians who lived in the center, to gain knowledge about the Berbers themselves and their lands was difficult as it was unavailable to them in the early years of Islamic rule. As it was imperative to be aware of events in the periphery to formulate their version of Berber ‘origins,’ Eastern historians and genealogists made the trek to the Maghreb.
41 Ibid., 56.
42 Conversely, Kharjites, at odds with the Umayyad caliphate exalted Berbers as pure and devoted Muslims.
43 Eastern genealogists decided that Berbers made their way to North Africa by way of Palestine. Western or Andalusian genealogists determined Berbers hailed from Yemen.
44 Refers to the responses by non-Arab Muslims to the privileged status of Arabs within the Ummah, considered to be a sin according to the tenets of Islam. The use of the word existed before the ninth century. Kharjites used it to bring equality among all followers of Islam. It was a direct response to the Quraysh privilege to lead the Ummah.
power of Islam of the time.\textsuperscript{45} The Berber response was to “deconstruct and rebuild the official history of their conversion to Islam, in the act of simultaneous resistance to their social status and accommodation to overarching Islamic norms.”\textsuperscript{46} Anointing Berbers with Arab origins served to wash over the benign details of the Muslim conquests in North Africa, fostering a reunion “based on the return of the long lost cousins to the fold.”\textsuperscript{47} Competing origin myths never trickled down to the Amazigh masses, and Islamization left most Berbers with no awareness of their history or past.\textsuperscript{48}

**Amazigh Commemorations and Symbols**

Key to memory work and restoring the Berber narrative is historicizing and celebrating ancient Amazigh heroes and symbols, and there appears to be no shortage. Berber literature and children’s books feature Juba, the Libyan-born prince captured and raised by Julius Caesar and then subsequently given his own kingdom Numidia.\textsuperscript{49} Kahina is another heroine, holding special mythical status among the Imazighen as the Berber warrior queen and religious leader who led an indigenous resistance to the Muslim conquest of the Maghreb.\textsuperscript{50} Berbers engaged in the ranks of conquerors as well as in the dissemination of Islam in both Northern Africa and Spain. Tariq bin Ziyad, a fabled Berber commander of Umayyad forces, crossed the Strait of Gibraltar in 711AD into Iberia.\textsuperscript{51} He, too, belongs in the “pantheon of Berber heroes and is epitomized by the Rabat cultural center and school disseminating Berber culture that bears his name.”\textsuperscript{52, 53} Memory work involves appropriating and adapting the legacies of mythical Berber individuals and adapting it to a modern discourse.

Abdelkrim al-Khattabi is a Berber hero from the 1920s, whose fight against Spanish and French imperialism in the Rif Mountains inspired global national liberation movements.\textsuperscript{54} Abdelkrim has been sidelined by Moroccan history, so resuscitating his anti-colonial accomplishments is part of the Amazigh movement’s endeavor to “re-create and protect images and memory sites that allow groups to reinforce their identities against the constant push-pull of historical currents that threaten to manipulate them or sweep them away.”\textsuperscript{55} Abdelkrim became a symbol of Berber Pride, during the 2012 Arab protests that swept North Africa, assuming rock star status among Moroccan Berber youth who carried placards bearing his image along with Tamazight slogans demanding democratization. Abdelkrim’s legacy also jolted the larger Amazigh memory project: “the recovery of the history of Abdelkrim and his short-lived Republic is an ongoing project, intimately connected to the themes of marginalization and identity denial that characterize the overall Moroccan Amazigh discourse and the more local Riffian one as well.”\textsuperscript{56} Amazigh memory workers in Morocco have been trying, for several decades, to have his remains returned to the Rif from Egypt.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{45} Refers to the responses by non-Arab Muslims to the privileged status of Arabs within the \textit{Ummah}, considered to be a sin according to the tenets of Islam. The use of the word existed before the ninth century. Kharjites used it to bring equality among all followers of Islam. It was a direct response to the Quraysh privilege to lead the \textit{Ummah}.\textsuperscript{45}
\textsuperscript{46} This refers to the political ideology constructed from Islam than the religion itself.\textsuperscript{46}
\textsuperscript{47} Maddy-Weitzman, \textit{The Berber Identity}, 34.\textsuperscript{47}
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 33. Maddy-Weitzman claims what remained for Berbers were their tribal genealogies, which included fabricated Sharifian lineages.\textsuperscript{48}
\textsuperscript{49} A prolific scholar and fluent in both Greek and Latin, Juba wrote numerous books on history, archeology, geography, natural history and the arts. An ally of Rome and honored by Greece for his plethora of scholarly work, Berbers are very proud of Juba’s legacy in the Maghreb.\textsuperscript{49}
\textsuperscript{50} The region known as Numidia.\textsuperscript{50}
\textsuperscript{51} Maddy-Weitzman, \textit{The Maghrib}, 53.\textsuperscript{51}
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 53.\textsuperscript{52}
\textsuperscript{53} The school and cultural center opened in 2013.\textsuperscript{53}
\textsuperscript{54} Influenced National Movement leaders such as Ho-Chi-Min and Che Guevara. His Rifian Republic would temporarily unite the Berber tribes of the region and whose ultimate suppression required French intervention.\textsuperscript{54}
\textsuperscript{55} Maddy-Weitzman, \textit{The Maghrib}, 52.\textsuperscript{55}
\textsuperscript{56} Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, “A Turning Point? The Arab Spring and the Amazigh Movement,” Ethnic and Racial Studies 38, no. 14 (2015), 2504.\textsuperscript{56}
\textsuperscript{57} Maddy-Weitzman, \textit{The Maghrib}, 58. Collective memory can also be selective—it is as much about forgetting as it is about remembering. While
Over the years, symbols have emerged, such as the Amazigh flag, “created in 1997, at the Amazigh World Congress in the Canary Islands.” The flag is a pervasive icon adopted by the Amazigh cultural and linguistic movement both nationally and in the diaspora. Pre-Islamic symbols like Tifinagh script, dating back to the fourth century BCE, was at first appropriated for the Amazigh flag and propaganda purposes and is now the official script adopted for teaching, writing and reading Tamazight. The conscious adoption of symbols is meant to demonstrate Amazigh indigeneity and their uniqueness from Arabs. In addition to a revival of symbols, script and homage to heroes, Berber holidays have also been resurrected as further claim to Amazigh autochthonous-ness. It is these allegories of resistance and pre-Islamic symbols that provide “Amazigh activists with a forum to illustrate their deep-rooted history and to fashion a coherent and usable historical narrative complete with commemorative rituals.” It allows them the capacity to become effective organizers and agitators for the Amazigh movement and not mere casualties of Arab subjugation. Immortalizing heroes, heroines and symbols have launched a robust Amazigh culture and vibrant twenty-first-century identity.

Berber Dahir
David M. Hart, an ethnologist, specializing in the Berber tribes of the Rif, claims the debate over the Amazigh identity was not evident in pre-colonial Morocco until authorities of the French protectorate manufactured an Arab-Amazigh dichotomy with the 1930 Berber Dahir. The most divisive clause of the decree stated that in areas where the majority of the population was Berber speaking, Shari’a courts would cease to have jurisdiction and separate courts would be set up according to customary Berber law. French scholars, who knew little about the Amazigh, noted Berbers observing customary practice alongside Shari’a law and erroneously deduced that “Berber attachment to Islam was superficial.”

French authorities attempted to institutionalize Berber customary law at the expense of Shari’a. This gross misunderstanding by the French and their subsequent implementation of the Dahir instigated mass urban protests against French rule and galvanized the Arab national movement. Berbers, mostly opted for Shari’a and, ironically, their voices were rarely heard in the Dahir contestations. Arab nationalists feared the Dahir would benefit the Berbers, who would subsequently rally against the Arabs. Hart insists that upon careful reading of history, the latter did not occur and that France’s plan to separate the Berbers from the Arabs was a serious flaw in colonial policy. Berbers played leading roles in the grand battles that ended France’s occupation of Morocco. The Dahir read more like a punishment, with Berbers on the losing end and was “consistent with maintaining them in a state of rural stagnation and underdevelopment, keeping them isolated from urban life and removed from modernisation and political discourse.” James McDougall writes that just as Berbers have been invented by Arabs as part of their conquest and Arab empire, Berber identity was re-constructed by the French as a ‘race’ they could tolerate, while simultaneously separated from Arab communities.

Abdelkrim remains highly revered among the Amazighen, Thami El Glaoui, who personified colonial collaborator and became the Pasha of Marrakesh, rarely gets a mention in Amazigh work.


Yennayer is a holiday that marks the first manifestation of Berber civilization in recorded history: the conquest of Pharaonic Egypt in 950 BCE.

Maddy-Weitzman, The Maghrib, 52.

Dahir means decree. The 1930 Berber decree was part of France’s ‘divide and rule’ policy in Morocco and Algeria, to further entrench themselves and delineate good Berbers from recalcitrant Arabs.


For Arabs and Berbers alike, the practice of both Shari’a and customary law among Berbers was a norm and only became a red flag when the French made it an issue in the Berber Dahir.


Current Berber identity is a construct of modernity and finds itself as a palpable antithesis to state-controlled and directed political and social life, as well as hostile political Islamist trends. Maddy-Weitzman says that reciprocal actions by Berbers with “other forms of collective affiliation—tribal, national and religious” will be key in how Morocco and Algeria’s states, elites and general population co-exist and accept the complex and interconnected political, economic and social tensions of the 21st century.
The Berber Dahir remains embedded in the collective memory of both Arabs and Berbers, and the schism it generated is still palpable. Although the French abandoned the decree in 1934, its policy of dividing Berbers from Arabs, “underpinned by a well-constructed set of original and character mythology, created obstacles for Berbers in Morocco who were challenged to demonstrate their patriotic and anti-colonial credentials.”

Independence delivered a new set of controversies between the state authority and its indigenous populations. Morocco’s vision of ruling elites was “to incorporate heterogeneous, tribe-oriented speakers of primarily unwritten Berber dialects under the rubric of a homogeneous national identity based on Sunni Islam, Malaki praxis and primacy to the Arabic language.”

Over the course of two decades following independence, the process of nation-building obstructed the task of state-building, weakening the Moroccan state’s ability to exercise effective social control as well as limit its capacity to forge legitimate institutions. “The political, social and cultural exchanges between Arab and Amazigh populations in this phase was crucial to the construction of contemporary identity politics. Prior to the 1912 Treaty of Fez, Berber speakers constituted two-thirds of Morocco’s populace. Post-colonial policies of Arabization diminished the number of speakers, significantly. Although Berber languages had been downgraded to rural dialect and the number of speakers diminished, there was an increase in the ‘self-conscious manifestation of Berber culture, concerned with preserving cultural and linguistic traditions,’ which speaks to the determination of the Imazighen to keep their linguistic and cultural practices alive.

Language, a Royal Dahir and an Imagined Geography

For current activists, the Tamazight language is the cornerstone of Berber culture and identity. Here they draw from the historical evidence that Tamazight has been spoken for as long as they existed in the Maghreb and also from the medieval Berber-Islamic dynasties – where a confluence of culture, language, and Islam cemented their Berber-Islamic identity. Arab speaking functionaries were replaced as Friday prayers were delivered in Tamazight and used in religious books, “defending the legitimacy of their language and speaking population in a religious context.” But, fast-forward to 1999 when the Tamazight-translated Qur’an was banned in Morocco until 2003. This linguistic minefield opened old wounds of unpleasant events from early Islamic history. Berber intellectuals argued that the Qur’an was already translated into numerous languages, so why not Tamazight? The controversy tested the power of the state and Islam where the tenacity of the Berber language, and the sheer numbers of Tamazight speakers, was considered an impediment to urban civilization that strongly identifies with “orthodox Islam and high Arabic culture.” The Tamazight translation of the Qur’an, at the time, was viewed as a serious threat to Moroccan official culture and political identity, which the state was not willing to relinquish.

---

66 Separate from the Berber decree, but fundamental to colonial practice, was the confiscation of land, a primary factor around which Berber society was organized. The French overruled Amazigh traditions and communal land rights. Appropriation of communal land yielded a significant loss of social and cultural life. Key traditional holidays that demonstrated the sharing of land, its harvest and general mutual solidarity, according to Berber customary law, vanished with land confiscation.


68 Berbers, in large numbers, fought with the Liberation Army to oust the French, highlighting their supra-tribal Berber identity, and then supported the movement to re-install Mohammed V as the king of independent Morocco. Istiqlal had Berber leaders killed, shortly thereafter, as they were seen as a threat to Istiqlal’s ambitions.


71 Maddy-Weitzman, The Berber Identity, 8. Today Berber speakers make up forty-five percent of Moroccans.

72 Ibid., 68.

73 During the Roman occupation, there was a brief switch to Latin by elites.

74 Cornwell and Aria, “Imaginative Geographies,” 259. “Even though the arrival of a greater number of Arabic-speaking tribes from Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula from the end of the tenth century helped spread the Arabic language into large portions of the coastal plains and pre-desert plateaus, Morocco was and continues to be incompletely Arabized.”


77 Refers to the tyranny of the Umayyad Caliphs toward newly converted non-Arabs to Islam.


79 Algeria translated the Qur’an into Tamazight in 2007 with the assistance of Religious Affairs Ministry.
Cornwell and Atia assert that “over the last four decades, Amazigh activists in Morocco have sought to redress the unequal distribution of power in defining Moroccan national identity.” The homogenization process of nation building that largely excluded the Amazigh narrative led to the creation of AMREC (Morocco Cultural Association) in the “late 1960s to protect and promote Amazigh identity in villages, towns, and in the national political discourse.” Fearing the wrath of King Hassan, AMREC maintained a low profile over the next fifteen years, much to the chagrin of militant Berbers. Moroccan authorities eventually made small gestures to AMREC, allowing their publication of a bi-monthly Amazigh journal and holding public forums to sensitize the overall Moroccan society on issues related to Berber language and culture. A turning point in official attitude came in 1994 when King Hassan declared teaching and learning Amazigh “dialects” was compulsory for all Moroccans. Amazigh cultural organizations amplified their work to promote Amazigh language and culture to help enforce the King’s decision. It should be noted that the “spectacular revival of Amazigh language and culture came at a time when Islamic extremism started to gain space in the Moroccan political landscape.” The political elite saw Amazigh language promotion as a vaccination against “the growing Islamist ideology and the Middle Eastern homogenizing Pan-Arabism.”

The official attitude toward Berbers shifted, in a positive direction in 2001, when the new King Muhammad VI claimed that the advancement of Amazigh language and culture was a Moroccan responsibility. He urged all Moroccan forces and Istiqlal to recalibrate their positions and make necessary reforms. His visit to the Rif in 2001 fuelled the Amazigh memory project with a renewed legitimacy. Promoting social and economic improvement, along with the abatement of poverty in a region much neglected by his father, Muhammad VI used his trip to advocate for a decidedly Berber-Arab rapprochement in a profoundly symbolic way. Upon the King’s invitation, the son of Abdelkrim journeyed from Cairo to meet him during the Rif visit. Mohammed VI pledged to reconstruct the ruins of Abdelkrim’s base of operations in Ajdir, which was the capital of the Rif Republic from 1921-26.

Berbers sensing an opening with the new King pushed to promote the demands found in the Amazigh Manifesto. Penned in 2000, by mostly Moroccan Berber intellectuals, it is an extraordinary documented that presented its perception and analysis of Moroccan history – a far cry from the official story, with a set of nine substantial demands to situate Morocco’s Berbers at the center of the country’s collective identity. As well as outlining a program of remediation, the Manifesto acknowledges that the Arabic language is an elemental piece of Morocco’s cultural heritage and the strongest link for Arabs in the Maghreb, but not to the detriment of Tamazight and Amazigh culture. Often accused of being separatists by Islamists and

---

81 Language, the defining feature of Amazigh identity politics, has taken a positive turn, albeit with numerous obstacles and detours in the new millennium. Tamazight has been an official language of Morocco since 2012, although it does not exactly receive equal billing in the new Moroccan Constitution. Its official status is a source of consternation and contestation by both Moroccan Arabs and the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD). Cynical Berbers view Tamazight’s official language status as another way for the state to keep all political players divided. But this development is significant for modern Amazigh identity construction.
82 Cornwell and Atia, “Imaginative Geographies,” 260.
83 Amazigh activists employ minority rights arguments to advocate for greater recognition of culture and an increased role in the political sphere.
84 Cornwell and Atia, “Imaginative Geographies,” 262.
85 AMREC’s formation coincided with neighboring Kabyle actions in Algeria who were more vocal and politically active, challenging their state’s hegemonic state building path. King Hassan closely monitored the situation in Algeria, who consistently provided the template for Moroccan leaders how not to act.
87 Ibid., 35.
88 In keeping with his father’s practice of appeasing Imazighen, these ‘openings’ created by the new King were likely a response to the violent protests in 2001 Algeria, culminating in the Black Spring. These clashes were a response to decades of Amazigh marginalisation and strict Arabisation policies of the Algerian state.
90 Ibid., 36. Maddy-Weitzman asserts that Mohammad VI, with honoring Abdelkrim, was looking to emphasize that the Berbers were an integral part of the Moroccan fabric.
Istiqlal, Berbers reject the charge and instead demand democratization and a rearranging of national priorities. Authors of the Manifesto are resolute in their purpose to contest an instituted hegemonic cultural program that entombs a vital component of Morocco’s civilizational heritage.

Mohammad VI embarked on a series of reforms to usher the state into the modern era. By a Royal Dahir, he created the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) in Rabat, recognizing Amazigh culture and language and mandating the implementation of Tamazight, universally, into all Moroccan schools. “By September 2003 Amazigh officially entered the Moroccan educational system, a powerful public space, for the first time in history. This marked the transition of Amazigh from the private sphere to the public arena of authority.” IRCAM’s formation split the Imaazighen, with some seeing it as an opportunity to move forward with their demands while others, more cynical, saw it as a “classical state plan to co-opt and defang their movement.” The teaching of Amazigh was officially motivated by two things: the necessity to preserve it as a marker of Morocco’s ancestral identity and that millions of Berbers, particularly children, spoke it as their first language or mother tongue.

But, what would follow (within the Berber community and outside of it) was a protracted dispute over the pertinent script for Tamazight — Latin, Arabic or Tifinagh — the latter an ancient script used only by Touregs, that was otherwise no longer in use in the Maghreb. IRCAM tread carefully as they faced two major challenges. They did not wish to alienate the palace, the ultimate authority who could pull the plug on this history-changing mandate. They also faced the fury of the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) who strove to contain Berber identity within a traditional Arab-Islamic milieu. IRCAM finally decided on Tifinagh as the chosen script, which was considered to be a very bold move among Amazigh throughout the Maghreb as well as in the diaspora. Until this point, Tifinagh had been a resurrected identity marker only used on the flag, posters and graffiti. Standardized Tamazight, with Tifinagh script, now serves as a foundation of unity and a rallying force for the Amazigh Renaissance.

The debate over a script and tactics demonstrates that the Amazigh community is not homogeneous in its work and discourse, and the burden of ethno-cultural movements to organize and inspire their communities is arduous work. “The various strategies and practices pursued by the different groups that make up the movement emphasizes the strong sense of internal politics, debate and contestation over definitions and deployment of Amazigh identity.” Most Amazigh activists emphasize their cultural and linguistic features over political demands. It is a mostly non-confrontational strategy that allows a polemical and political debate to be part of the Moroccan public zeitgeist without questioning the legitimacy of the monarchy.

For Amazigh activists conquering the “double layering of colonialism,” first Arab then French, is an ongoing challenge. They must confront these colonial legacies while advocating for Amazigh rights in a constrained political space where “questioning certain elements of national identity has considerable legal consequences and is interpreted as a threat to the Monarchy.” Instead, activists cautiously present their political desires through a geographical imagining. This

Maddy-Weitzman claims that the Berber project has commonality with Attaturkism, in that it is explicitly secular, “opposing the use of religion as the basis for law in line with the trends of contemporary civilization.” Whereas Ataturk stressed the centrality of a homogeneous Turkish nation and culture, the Amazigh Manifesto imagines Morocco as an integration of geography, culture, and ethnicity.

This included modernisation and rights to liberate women and protect children.

Fatima, Sadiqi, The Teaching of Amazigh (Berber) in Morocco., 35.


The Berber language endured and thrived due to the sheer numbers of mostly rural speakers.

Algerian Kabyles used Arabic as their script when Tamazight became a national language in 2001.

Cornwell and Atia, “Imaginative Geographies,” 256.

Ibid., 256. Again not a homogeneous narrative among Amazigh memory and cultural workers. Moroccan Berbers in the Rif, which has its own rich history of revolt, republicanism, poverty and migration, pursue more confrontational political action. While the Berber national question is hardly addressed, it remains a popular narrative in the Rif. Cornwell and Atia claim the country’s Berber movement, historically, has focused on cultural and linguistic matters, like making Tamazight an official language.

Cornwell and Atia, “Imaginative Geographies,” 265.

Ibid., 261.
Final Thoughts

The question remains: where and how do Berbers fit in? Berber identity has been constructed and reconstructed throughout space and time. During the early decades of independence, it was thought that “Berbers would assimilate and their ethnic identity, not develop past their particular tribal loyalties within an Islamic milieu,” and be wedded to a twentieth-century Arab nationalist and Islamic modernity. However, Berber perseverance was highly underestimated and in the last decades there has been an emergence of new ideas and practices of Berber imagining – resulting in a vibrant, national and transnational Amazigh Cultural Movement. “Berber speakers across North Africa see themselves a named unit of the population, with common ancestry myths and historical memories, elements of shared culture and links with a historical territory along with a shared solidarity.”

For the most part, the social boundaries between Arabs and Berbers in modern Morocco are generally smooth and cordial, contradicting French colonial discourse and notions among some scholars and policy makers who speak in terms of a Berber-Arab dichotomy. Given the advances made by Amazigh cultural and memory workers, it might be necessary to revisit these ‘official’ narratives. Clinging to outdated adages only serves to “harden social boundaries and intolerance in the name of cultural authenticity, a process which can only substitute one essential authenticity for another.” Re-examining the ‘Berber and Arab’ relationship requires a more nuanced awareness of Maghrebi history, to stop looking at cultural differences, yet appreciate a dual ethnic distinction and striking a balance between Berbers and Arabs as two communities of language and heredity within the framework of a modern pluralist Moroccan state. However, it is imperative to note that the Berber-Arab dichotomy are terms not only invented by “outsiders who wrote the history of the region with a biased intent.” Both Berbers and Arabs are responsible for the construction of these
ethnic tensions and range of terms, particularly when Arabs “wrote as Muslim historians in the premodern state, and then as Arab nationalist historians in the post-colonial modern state.”\textsuperscript{110} It might also be important to consider the extent to which Berber discourse duplicates French colonial tropes and “essentialism about Berbers and their culture as an antithesis of Arabic and Islam.”\textsuperscript{111} There is a vigorous and politically charged narrative held among a minority of Berbers militants who assert that Arab nationalism is a pernicious foreign import from the Mashriq\textsuperscript{112} and a danger to their ethnicity as well as cultural and historical legacies. These conflicting and discursive narratives within Amazigh cultural and memory work should be viewed as part of normal growing pains of a fairly young movement advocating for fuller inclusivity in a national discourse. Moroccan Amazigh intellectuals and activists are agitating and lobbying, albeit in different ways, for their cultural authenticity to be included in a historiography from which they have appeared and disappeared for the convenience of those who have ruled over them. “If the secret of identity is memory, the historical and ethnic past must be salvaged and re-appropriated so as to renew the present and build a common future in a world of competing national communities.”\textsuperscript{113} It remains to be seen if future Amazigh efforts will be legitimized, or rejected, and to what degree they will continue to affect state policies. The demands of citizens often clash with the direction of state in how the latter responds to complex and interconnected political, economic and social tensions. It is hopeful that the reconstruction of a modern Amazigh identity, by the Imazighen, will be an ongoing endeavor whose impact has the capacity to reshape and enrich the identity of a twenty-first century Moroccan society as a whole.

\textsuperscript{111} Cornwell and Atia, “Imaginative Geographies,” 270.
\textsuperscript{112} Translates to ‘East’, an Arabic term referring to the Eastern region of the Middle East.
\textsuperscript{113} Maddy-Weitzman, \textit{The Maghrib}, 68.
Works Cited


This essay argues that Khusrau I Anushirvan (r. 531-579) was the most effective Sasanian ruler due to his various cultural, economic, and military reforms, which all served the greater purpose of centralizing the Sasanian polity. Khusrau’s reforms established significant precursors for the centralizing reforms of the later Islamic caliphate. His economic reforms created a new treasury designed for organized financial planning and boosted revenue. His military reforms protected the Sasanian empire from enemies and enabled the Sasanian army to engage in successful military campaigns. Finally, Khusrau’s cultural reforms resulted in the intellectual flourishing and diversification of the Sasanian empire. Thus, the economic, military, and cultural reforms of Khusrau led to a centralized polity – making Khusrau Anushirvan among the most effective Sasanian rulers reigning at a time when the Sasanian empire was at its height.

Khusrau’s economic reforms led to greater efficiency in tax collection, increased revenue for the treasury, and centralized financial planning. Prior to these reforms, the Sasanian economy was primarily based on a land-tax system. The collection of taxes would vary depending on the state of irrigation and cultivation prior to the harvest season. This meant that the treasury would receive an unfixed amount of taxes on an irregular basis, thereby preventing the establishment of a financial planning system.¹ The land-tax system produced an inefficient taxation system and was a major factor in the absence of a land-survey. The land-survey reform began during the reign of Khusrau’s father, Kavad (r. 488-531), and was completed under Khusrau’s rule.² The completion of the land-survey project was significant as it resulted in the formation of smaller provinces for taxation purposes which meant that all land would be taxed following the harvest season according to the size of each plot of land and the type of crop it grew. Land owners were taxed per the following provisions, with drahm being the currency of the Sasanian polity and the jarib being a unit of measurement (approximately one-tenth of a hectare): 1 drahm for every jarib of cereals, 1 drahm for every 4 date palms, 7 drahms for a jarib of clover, 7 drahms for 4 olive trees, 7 drahms for 6 fig trees, and 8 drahms for every jarib of vine. Although taxes were to be collected in hard currency, it is highly probable that they were also paid in kind.³ This particular tax reform, started by Khusrau’s father but finalized by Khusrau Anushirvan, allowed for more tax to be collected in a timely manner and redirect funds from the land-owning upper class to the newly-created central treasury.

In order to serve the interest of his subjects, Khusrau also implemented a new complaint system run by scribes, judges, and personnel from his palace that was intended to receive the complaints of tax-payers in regards to the tax collection process in their newly-formed districts. This complaint system was established to check the treasury administrators and provincial governors, who initially

² Ibid.
³ Encyclopaedia Iranica, s.v “Kosrow I ii. Reforms” (by Zeev Rubin).
conspired to shield any and all public criticism. Although more of an administrative reform, this complaint system resulted in the treasury being held to a higher standard of accountability to the monarch and the people, thus contributing to greater overall centralization within the taxation system. In addition to reforming the land-tax system, Khusrau also reformed the jizya or the poll-tax. People were taxed 4, 6, 8, and 12 drhams based on their wealth or lack thereof. Those under the age of 20 and above the age of 50 remained untaxed, as well as the poor, chronically ill, scribes, warriors, fire-priests, notables, people from upper-class families, Zoroastrians, and individuals serving the king. While this particular reform did not exclude tax exemptions to the wealthy, it was counter-acted by the tax exemptions allowed to those under 20 and over 50, as well as the sick and poor. Within the context of antiquity, this interpretation of the jizya appeared not only efficient, but also more equitable than other versions. Therefore, the implementation of various tax reforms resulted in a highly centralized taxation system that boosted and stabilized revenue for the treasury and allowed for organized financial planning.

Moreover, Khusrau is also noted for the series of military reforms he executed. His reforms aimed to protect the polity against potential invaders and to enable the Sasanian military to launch more successful campaigns. Prior to these reforms, there had been a Mazdakite uprising during the 520’s that targeted the previous king – Khusrau’s father, Kavad – and greatly weakened the aristocracy in the process. Both Kavad and Khusrau managed to suppress these revolts. Khusrau took advantage of this weakened aristocratic class by securing his own monarchical hegemony against the nobility and local powerbrokers through the implementation of new centralizing economic, military and cultural reforms. One of these reforms established a small land-holding gentry known as the Dehghan. The establishment of this new class is critical, since the dehghans would replace the nobility as the base of the reformed Sasanian military. They would, moreover, act as tax collectors for the newly centralized treasury, and undercut the power held by the aristocratic class. Following this particular reform, Khusrau set out to reorganize his military while buttressing Persia from potential invaders. First, he secured the borders of the Sasanian empire by erecting a series of defensive walls along the north-east, north-west, south-east, and south-west borders of the Empire. Then, he proceeded to split Persia into four military quadrants – north-west, north-east, south-west, and south-east – each of which were governed by a general or Spahbed. Other military reforms included the formation of special units to assume internal security in the form of policing and border-control duties, the creation of a military registry or Diwan, and the recruitment of loyal Persian outsider forces to aid in military operations. Khusrau was also primarily concerned with the reorganization and training of the military whilst great-relying on the heavy-armed cavalry, as opposed to introducing new weaponry or shifting towards another style of combat. By executing these reforms, Khusrau was able to strengthen the Sasanian defense forces through the centralization and expansion of military forces in tandem with erecting security walls along the borders of the empire, which enabled him to protect it from invaders whilst leading more successful conquests and battles.

---

6 Encyclopaedia Iranica, s.v “Kosrow I ii. Reforms” (by Zeev Rubin).
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., 30.
12 Daryaee, “Iran and an-iran”, 30.
Lastly, Khusrau’s cultural reforms contributed to the literary flourishing and cultural diversification of the Persian Empire. Khusrau was engaged in cultural exchanges between the east and west. His offering of hospitality to Byzantine Neo-Platonist philosophers, following the closure of their school in Athens as per Justinian’s orders, might indicate his interest in philosophy. Furthermore, when the Neo-Platonist philosophers expressed their desire to return home, Khusrau negotiated their exemption from punishment in Byzantium during peace negotiations with the Empire in 532. Khusrau became known as one of Plato’s philosopher-kings. Indian culture also had a significant influence on the cultural reforms employed by Khusrau. The Persian monarch most famously commissioned a translation of the Indian Panchatantra after the physician Burzoe had been sent to India by Khusrau to gather various Sanskrit works on literature, astronomy, statecraft, and medicine. Additionally, Khusrau imported the game of chess from India, which he considered to be an important game for strategy and statecraft. He also combined Byzantine and Indian medical literature into a single translated work in Middle Persian, which would eventually be a source of reference for successive Arabic literature on the subject during the Islamic caliphate. The Avesta was also codified during the reign of Khusrau, in tandem with the creation of an Avestan alphabet. Other literary achievements conceived at Khusrau’s helm include the production of the Khwatauy-Namak or Book of Kings and the Meydan-e Hezar Dadestan or the Book of a Thousand Deeds. Although the famous Shahnameh by Ferdowsi was composed around the 9th or 10th century CE, it heavily drew upon the period of Sasanian rule under Khusrau. These cultural exchanges and literary achievements enriched nearly all facets of Sasanian life, from law to poetry, while further legitimizing Khusrau’s leadership. Therefore, Khusrau’s cultural and intellectual activities made his reign emblematic of Sasanian Persia and its empire.

Khusrau Anushirvan’s economic, military, and cultural reforms all served the greater purpose of centralizing the Sasanian empire thereby helping to solidify Khusrau as the most memorable Sasanian ruler. Among his economic reforms, Khusrau completed the land-survey started by his father, revamped the previous land-tax system, made the taxation system more accountable to the public and the monarch, and instituted the jizya in a more equitable manner. These significant alterations resulted in the creation of a treasury, the centralization of the taxation system, the stabilization of and increase in revenue, and organized financial planning. Moreover, Khusrau’s various military reforms included the creation of the Dehghan class and the subsequent reduction in the power of aristocratic classes, the erection of defensive walls, the reorganization of the military, and the founding of the Diwan. These particular reforms safeguarded the empire from invaders and enabled the Sasanian army to engage in more successful military campaigns. Finally, Khusrau engaged in cultural exchanges with the east and west by adopting and synthesizing Byzantine and Indian works on medicine, astrology, statecraft, philosophy, poetry, and many other intellectual and artistic fields. It was also under his rule that the Avestan alphabet was codified. Thus, Khusrau Anushirvan’s reign was not only a time of military and economic success for the Sasanian empire but also a time of great cultural and intellectual flourishing.

15 Daryaee, “Iran and an-Iran”, 30.
16 Encyclopaedia Britannica, s.v “Khosrow I: King of Persia” (by Richard N. Frye).
17 Wiesehöfer, Late Sasanian, 127.
Works Cited


Folktales and Magic in Ancient Egypt

Naomi Sinclair

In Ancient Egypt, magic was considered a gift from the gods. It is no surprise then that magic, and the people who wielded it, figured centrally in folktales. However, certain fantastical acts were considered impossible in real daily life. Magic was conceptualized as a form of knowledge acquired through education. In this essay, I will compare the magic used by folk heroes in two tales with magical spells purportedly used by real magicians, and thereafter, attempt to identify what real magicians believed they could accomplish. First, I will analyze the event of the lake folding as it is described in *The Boating Party*, one of three stories from the so-called *Three Tales of Wonder*¹, in conjunction with other water manipulation spells. Then I will compare the act of wax animation as described in *Setne Khamwas and Naneferkaptah*² to the use of other figurines in attested spell work. Additionally, I will look at how women magicians are depicted, in comparison to their male counterparts. By the end of this paper, I will demonstrate how the Ancient Egyptian’s understanding of their world was impacted by the conceived distinction between practical and impossible magic, and how something understood as a natural part of daily life, like magic, could be shaped by human consciousness.

In *The Boating Party*, “the chief lector-priest…placed one side of the lake’s water upon the other…”³ in order to retrieve a lost necklace. A similar act of water manipulation occurs in a real life magic spell wherein Isis is invoked by a magician and she, “closed the mouth of the river…the waves do not immerse it”⁴. This passage is from a protection spell in which Isis manipulates the conditions of the river by casting a protection over it and making it free of crocodiles. Both the spells stop the natural movement of water and bend it to the will of the magician, but they do so through very different means and for very different reasons.

In *The Boating Party*, the lector-priest uses his magic to retrieve a necklace as a favour to the king. He exerts direct control over his environment and for non-crucial reason. In contrast, when Isis stops the river in the spell, she does so as an avatar of protection invoked by a real-life magician who uses this power as a defense in a potential life-or-death situation. While both Isis and the lector-priest are powerful enough to manipulate water, the magician who invokes the Isis spell is not. The spell recounts a brief story about Isis stopping water, declaring it free of crocodiles, and that “protection has arrived”⁵. The one reciting this spell makes no attempt to control water, but instead uses the recitation of such an action as a bridge between the real limitations of human ability and the impossibility of divine power. It is worth noting that while the lector-priest’s act of magic in *The Boating Party* was one of whimsy, crocodiles were a real threat. Folk magicians use magic in a way that real humans cannot because the manipulation of water is not possible in the real world, whereas in folklore, there are no limits to what magic can do.

⁵ Ibid, 88.
In Setne Khamwas and Naneferkaptah, Naneferkaptah “had [much] pure [wax brought] to him. He made a boat and filled it with its rowers and sailors. He recited a spell to them, he made them live, he put them on the water…He said to the rowers: ‘Row me…’” Naneferkaptah was able to use magic to create a boat with a living crew from wax to ferry him to his destination. In the spells used by real world magicians, where such figurines are also cast, there is one crucial difference. Many of the spells used in non-folkloric magic specify clay figurines, rather than wax figurines – though this could simply be explained by the wisdom of having a boat and crew made of a hydrophobic material and not clay. Clay figurines are common for medicinal spells, as they act as a vector for whatever poison or sickness is affecting the body of the patient; “Words to be said over a woman’s statue of clay…the affliction will be sent down from him into the Isis-statue.” While Naneferkaptah’s figurines come to life and serve him, the figurines used in medicinal spells are never made animate by spellcasting, they only act as a conduit for magic.

Once again, the real world magical spell attempts to bridge human limitations by accessing divine intervention whereas the folkloric magician defies possibility by creating new life. The only other figurine magic similar to that performed by Naneferkeptah, is done with ushabti figurines, which are buried with the dead to perform their labour in the afterlife. One explanation as to why servant type figurines occur in mortuary and folkloric magic is because both the realms of death and imagination are beyond that of the living world. These are worlds where animating figurine servants are possible. However, the idea that an illness, the cause of which is invisible to the human eye, can be drawn from the human body into another vessel is more probable. Therefore, the use of figurines as vessels in practical magic makes more sense than having spells, like Naneferkaptah’s, which infuses figurines with life.

Just as figurines drew immaterial things, such as sickness or love, from the body into the physical vessel of the figurine through certain spells, a reverse form of magic is also possible. Spells that include actions such as “Words to be said over an image of Atum-Horus-Heknu, a woman’s figurine of Isis and an image of Horus. To be drawn on the hand of the sufferer. To be licked off by the man” use the drawn image as a vector to bring something immaterial, such as a cure, into the physical world – which is then consumed by the human to be imbued with its positive properties. Both the spells transmute something invisible to the human eye, whether it is an illness or cure, between states of physicality. Instead of drawing something out of the human body, as in the spell utilizing clay figurines, this sort of magic allows something to be put into it. Both examples perform the same action of bringing something immaterial into the sphere of human influence in the physical world, allowing the Ancient Egyptians to exert greater control over their circumstances.

The connections between folkloric magic and the real world application of magic are tenuous at best, because they served different functions in Ancient Egyptian society. The magic utilized in daily life accounted for the limitations of the human world and did not attempt to influence how the natural world functioned. Instead, they focused on influencing the immaterial.

---

7 Borghouts, Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts, 32.
8 Borghouts, Magical Texts, 55.
Diverting illness into statues or invoking a spiritual familiarity with Isis’ protection were all forms of magic that did not seek to manipulate the laws of the physical world and therefore would not automatically fail. If magicians tried to fold over water as the lector-priest did in *The Boating Party* they would meet with automatic failure but if, instead, a magician recited a spell that invoked Isis’ protective powers, success was more assured because spiritual protection and warding were just as immaterial as magic itself. The use of amplifiers or magical tools, such as figurines, does not contradict this ‘rule’ because they are also indirect means of influence. The physical properties of these tools are not expected to change with the ritual, only their invisible spiritual imbuelement. Only in equally immaterial situations such as death or fantasy is it possible for material things to be equally altered in their physicality as their spirituality.

**Women, Magic, and Literature**

In Ancient Egypt, women were seen as having dual natures: both violent and unpredictable, and domestic and pleasing. Didactic literature, such as the *Instruction of Ptah-hotep* and *The Instruction of Any*, makes reference to the benefits of keeping a woman and the dangers of an unknown or unhappy woman. In Borghouts Spell 66 the magician repels the foreign woman and her negative powers. A foreign woman’s “negative” powers can be described as such for either two reasons. First, there is something inherently suspicious and dangerous about women and female magical practice. Second, she is foreign and the xenophobia of Ancient Egyptian society would make her suspect regardless of sex. However, the fact that there are no equivalent spells against foreign men indicate that Ancient Egyptians found something inherently suspicious and mystical about women that was absent from men. This wariness towards women can be seen in other literary texts such as the stories of *Setne Khamwas and Naneferkaptah* and *The Two Brothers*, where magical women behave dangerously and often to the detriment of their male counterparts.

In *Setne Khamwas and Naneferkaptah*, Setne Khamwas’ encounter with Tabubu the enchantress leads him so astray that he allows her to kill his children in front of him without any reaction aside from his intense desire for her.

“She said to him: ‘…If you desire to do what you wish with me, you must have your children killed…’ Setne said: ‘Let the abomination that came into your head be done to them.’ She had his children killed in front of him. She had them thrown down from the window to the dogs and cats. They ate their flesh, and he heard them as he drank with Tabubu.”

The power that beautiful women have over men is well reflected in *The Two Brothers* wherein the word of Anubis’ wife agitates him into attempting the murder of his brother (though she herself seems ambivalent to this result, as she warns the younger brother of the danger).

“Her husband said to her: ‘Who has had words with you?’ She said to him: ‘No one has had words with me except your young brother…Now if you let him live, I shall die!...’ Then his elder brother became like a leopard…she said to the herdsman” “Here is your elder brother waiting for you with his spear in order to kill you…”

---


Later in the story, Bata’s wife betrays him and has him killed no less than three times, and she vexes her new husband the Pharaoh by making him promise to destroy the bull and the trees he values.\(^\text{12}\) The power that these women have over men wavers between seduction and magical entrapment, especially considering the magical properties of some of them, like Bata’s wife who was made by the gods for him\(^\text{13}\) and Tabubu who is a woman “of priestly rank”\(^\text{14}\). Instruction texts that advised on how to deal with women reflected this same anxiety towards female behaviour and their abilities to influence men, which show that the general anxiety Egyptian society felt towards women was not limited to foreign women, but perhaps was only heightened when an individual was faced with the twofold conundrum of dealing with someone who was both foreign and female, magical and female, or in the worst case scenario, foreign, magical, and female.

What these literary women have in common is their ability to bring a man to ruin or at least, great agitation, a fact recognized in the previously mentioned Spell 66, which seeks to negate the power of a female outsider by likening her to the refuse of her antithesis, a man. “Are you a slave woman? Then come as <his> vomit. Are you a noblewoman? Then come as his piss. Come as the slime of his nose, come as the sweat of his limbs!”\(^\text{15}\) This spell specifically targets foreign women, which raises the question of whether their foreignness or their femaleness was the main cause of anxiety. Ancient Egyptians were typically xenophobic as well as wary of women. In the story of Setne Khamwas and Si-Osire, the villain, Horus-son-of-the-Nubian-woman, is as his name states the son of a Nubian woman. He conspires to “take the shame of Egypt to the land of Nubia”\(^\text{16}\) by spiriting away the Pharaoh in the night and beating him 500 times in front of the Nubian ruler. The Nubian woman, though not directly involved in this plot, has her own magic which allows her to transform into a goose and fly to Egypt to save her son when he is caught and about to be killed by Horus-son-of-Paneshe. Spell 66 targets foreign, female sorcerers like the Nubian woman in Setne Khamwas and Si-Osire. The Nubian woman was never an antagonist in the story, but the magical powers she had along with her own son’s magic and his plot against the Pharaoh reflect the potential threat of foreign women as wielders of magic, foreigners, and as the mothers and protectors of Egypt’s enemies.

Ancient Egyptian society conveys its anxiety towards women outside the domestic realm or as its disruptors\(^\text{17}\) by the troublemaking that these literary women instigate. It is important to note that women abuse their “idealized” form as homemakers as a way of furthering their manipulations. In The Two Brothers, Bata’s wife appeased the Pharaoh by charming him and pouring him drinks before making him promise to give up his bull to her:

“She poured drink for his majesty, and he was very happy with her. Then she said to his majesty: ‘Swear to me by God, saying: ‘Whatever she will say, I will listen to it!’ He listened to all that she said: ‘Let me eat of the liver of this bull; for he is good for nothing.’ So she said to him. He became very vexed over what she said, and the heart of the Pharaoh was sore.”\(^\text{18}\)

This subverts the domesticity of women as being a complacent aspect of their personality and instead shows her capacity for disruption even within her desired role, harkening back to the idea that women’s duplicity

---


\(^{13}\) Ibid, 207.


\(^{15}\) Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts*, 42.

\(^{16}\) Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: Volume III, The Late Period*, 146.

\(^{17}\) Depla, “Women in Ancient Egyptian Wisdom Literature,” 37.

can make them as difficult as they are beloved by men.19

Both Bata’s unnamed wife and Tabubu fall outside of the norm for women, as Bata’s wife was divinely made and Tabubu was a high-ranking priestess. While neither of these roles necessarily mean that they could not fulfil the traditional role of a homemaker, they both choose not to and instead engaged in behaviour that was entirely self-serving and gave no consideration for the impact their choices had on their male counterparts. The fact that these two literary figures were unusually magical and their stories were recorded in periods of social change indicate an underlying growth in the Ancient Egyptian social consciousness of magical, powerful, or otherwise non-traditional women as untrustworthy.

Both The Two Brothers and the story of Setne Khamwas and Tabubu are from the New Kingdom and Late Period respectively, which as Depla points out, are the periods in which the archetype of woman as a ‘temptress’ arose in Ancient Egyptian literature, and only continues into the Greco-Roman period.20 Women were, moreover, represented as instigators of adulterous affairs – a role previously associated with men.21 The reasoning behind this change is difficult to determine. Were women taking on new roles in society outside the home, in greater numbers, and therefore, there was increasing social anxiety about the appropriate roles and behaviours of women? The Late Period instruction text, The Instruction of Ankhsheshonq, shows this change in attitude towards women and their roles, “A low woman does not have a life. A bad woman does not have a husband.”22 When comparing The Instruction of Ptahhotep, possibly composed as early as the Old Kingdom, which advises, “And love you wife with ardor….Gladden her heart as long as you live, She is a fertile field for her lord….Her eye is her storm when she gazes- Thus will you make her stay in your house”23 and The Instruction of Any from the New Kingdom, which says, “Beware of a woman who is a stranger…. A deep water whose course is unknown, Such is a woman away from her husband…. She is ready to ensnare you….”24 it is clear that the Late Period instruction texts are both condescending and dismissive of women. Earlier instruction texts convey a woman’s agency in misbehaviour and the benefits of maintaining a happy relationship with one, whereas The Instruction of Ankhsheshonq shows much more distrust towards women and decries their general character more than it tries to balance between the ‘unpredictable’ vs. ‘domestic’ natures of women shown earlier. Thus, advice such as “What she does with her husband today she does with another man tomorrow”25 and “Do not open your heart to your wife…”26 illustrates a shift in male intellectual thought from trying to balance the dual natures of women towards trying to contain the predominantly ‘unpredictable’ woman.

Women, though not without considerable rights and freedoms, still occupied a subordinate space in the social hierarchy of Ancient Egypt and this is reflected in how they were depicted in both folklore and in magical spells. Deviation from their idealized roles and behaviours was uncomfortable for their male counterparts, who wrote about these deviations and the nature of women as dangerous. Part of the anxiety surrounding women was derived from their necessity to men and men’s ultimate desire to be around them and to please them, even at the potential risk of personal loss. This discomfort is expressed in early instruction texts and eventually gave way to the creation of a ‘temptress’

20 Ibid, 49.
21 Ibid, 37.
22 Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature: Volume III, The Late Period, 179.
23 Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature: Volume I, Old and Middle Kingdoms, 69.
26 Ibid, 169.
A woman who led men astray and caused them grief. This ‘temptress’ figure was, in part, channeled by the figure of the magical women – who, either by creation or by vocation, used her powers and unnatural properties to upset the status quo. This is not to say that magic was any less of a part of the daily lives of women in Ancient Egypt, as it was a fundamental resource in childbirth, but women were generally already considered something of a social outlier and an unknown. Any subsequent alienation from the stereotypical model of Egyptian womanhood, such as being foreign or possessing unusual magical knowledge, only increased the perceived danger of these women and the anxiety over their magical abilities and powers, both over men or otherwise. It is no surprise then that while these texts explored the ways in which women could deviate from the norm and benefit from it, ultimately the male protagonist would win out and reassert authority over the narrative, just as Spell 66 sought to reassert power over foreign women’s powers. Magical women occupied a different space in folktales than their male counterparts as a result of their different social status and reputation, and their magical ability and acts were treated and performed differently as a consequence.

Death and Magic

The idea of death as a transformative factor in an item’s magical capabilities is worth further critical analysis. If death allows for the opportunity of physical and spiritual transformation, as exemplified by the ushabtis, how is it then that necropolises were so susceptible to plundering? If the liminality of death is a potential amplifier for transformative magic, at what point were the dead and their associated magic considered potent in the physical world of the living? While the dead transition into and occupy a new spiritual realm, they simultaneously remain a presence in the material world and therefore are subject to its laws, in part because of the rituals and significance placed on the tomb and the mummy. The dead are then susceptible to both ideations of magic, which allow them to both transcend beyond human visibility and comprehension, and yet remain in the physical world where human needs and desires would render their immaterial magical powers inconsequential. Mortuary magic was closely tied to the preservation and condition of the tomb and the mummy. Given their physical vulnerabilities, both these things were susceptible to robbery and desecration, acts which could not be directly prevented by the magical and spiritual nature of the dead. Although, the Ancient Egyptians did believe in the power of the dead to torment the dreams of the living whom they felt had wronged them.

Death, and its associated magic and spells, are imperceptible to the naked human eye. One cannot see a human soul physically leave the body and the burial chamber where the mortuary spells and magical tools meant to assist the invisible soul are ideally sealed away and remain unseen and undisturbed afterwards. As a result, the tomb, its spells, and the ushabti figurines fall outside the normal realm of believable magic since living people cannot see them at work, there is no proof to say they are ineffective. This is most likely the reason there are not many commonly known spells for animating figurines besides the ushabti figurines, despite their common place in folklore stories. Ushabti figurines are supposed to work inside the tomb, where the living do not have access. Therefore, the ushabti figures are given stronger magical abilities of transformation and action than other figurines because they do not need to prove their magical capabilities, since the living are not meant to see them work.
Transitive Spaces and Dreams

The transitive space of life to death, wakefulness to sleep, is ideal for stronger magical feats, and provide an ideal realm for non-conventional magic use because of their invisibility and obscurity from the regular world. Just as the dead transition into an invisible realm, increasing their susceptibility to magic, sleeping and dreams offer living humans the same transition and imaginative ability for magic as they too access another “world” where the limitations of reality do not exist. The connection the living maintained with the dead, through offerings and letter writing, reveal that the dead were attributed with significant power and influence over the lives of the living. In the following 19th Dynasty letter from a husband to his deceased wife, Ankhiry, he laments “What have I done against you wrongfully for you to get into this evil disposition in which you are? What have I done against you? As for what you have done, it is your laying hands on me even though I committed no wrong against you.” 27 and later, “Now look, you don’t differentiate good from evil.” 28 These lines illustrate how the dead were believed to have a powerful influence over the lives of their living counterparts, and how death removed them from the same humanity and reasoning as the living. Ankhiry’s husband felt she unfairly tormented him and that she no longer recognized the difference between just and unjust behavior as a spirit in the afterlife. Death gave people greater magic and power because they occupied a new world that, though close to reality, was apart from it in such a way that the conventional laws of the universe did not apply and this extended to the constraints on magical ability. Dreams occurred not in the mind, but in a “spatial dimension” 29 where meeting between the living, the gods, and the dead could occur. 30 Appeals for spiritual and magical assistance, threats, and appeasement were all part of the exchanges that took place in this otherworld. The experiences listed in the Book of the Dead, meeting with gods and strange demons, all have an element of fantasy only paralleled in folk stories such as in the Setne Khamwas and Si-Osire when the Horus-son-of-Paneshe meets the god Toth in a dream. “Horus-son-of-Paneshe lay down in the temple. That night he dreamed a dream in which the mysterious form of the great god Toth spoke to him…” 31 Death and fantasy share the ability to bring humans closer to experiences that would be impossible in reality.

It is significant to note that Ancient Egyptians referred to death as ‘sleeping’. “The west, it is a land of sleep…. Those who are there sleep in their mummy-forms. They wake not…” 32 Perhaps this is a recognition of the similarities between the action of laying down to die and laying down to sleep wherein an individual is not wholly part of the living world. In both instances, humans reach out to another invisible world beyond reality. If dreams can break the mould of reality then it is not too much of a reach to suggest that sleeping and dreaming encompasses a potentially magical experience, as an individual could use their dreams to experience alternate realities or encounter gods. Naneferkaptah’s story was told to Setne Khamwas through a dream, and it is only by waking up that Setne Khamwas escapes sharing Naneferkaptah’s unhappy fate. In the story of the Setne Khamwas and Si-Osire, Horus-son-of-Paneshe encounter Toth through the dream world wherein such encounters between mortals and those who occupy the invisible world of gods, demons, and spirits was possible. For the Horus-son-of-Paneshe and for Setne Khamwas, sleep was a transitional space where they encountered unexpected magical forces.

28 Ibid, 217.
30 Ibid, 22.
31 Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature: Volume III, The Late Period, 146.
32 Ibid, 63.
Both the stories of *Setne Khamwas and Naneferkaptah* and *Setne Khamwas and Si-Osire* are fantasy stories, but they were set up as real-world encounters. The intense magical experiences their protagonists experienced beg the question of whether dreams themselves were seen as a gateway to greater magical encounters and if, like death and fantasy, dreams are unconstrained by the rules of reality do they share the same affiliation with heightened magical powers and encounters? Or are dreams just an unconnected part of the more powerful magic already prevalent in stories of fantasy?

Conclusion

Magic operated within the realm of possibility when it came to the application of practical, daily magical spells. The moment when folkloric magic’s fantastical abilities diverged from the realistic forms of magic occurs when its ability to influence the material world becomes completely improbable. Realistic magic had to maintain its invisibility in order to maintain its believability because if one cannot see whether it is working, one cannot prove that it is not effective. Trying to fold over water or bring wax statues to life was guaranteed to fail in the real world, but spiritual influence was impossible to prove or disprove regardless of whether the magical spell worked as intended. If an attempt at spiritual influence failed, it was not necessarily because it was an impossible task to begin with; it could be for a variety of other equally invisible factors such as demons or antagonistic magical intervention. The fundamental requirement for effective, real-world magic was not being able to prove that the magic being attempted was impossible. Invisibility was fundamental to other aspects of magic as well. The unseen worlds of the dead and of dreams provide a framework for not only more powerful magic in other worlds, but in the real world too. Ushabti figurines were animated and used for labour only in a mortuary context, and the dead themselves became capable of greater magic and influence in the afterlife. Dreams, like death provided an individual transition into a world of few magical limitations. As a world experienced on another plane of existence, dreams gave individuals the same freedom from the conventional limitations of reality. Just as real world magicians were prevented from performing the same magical feats as their counterparts in folk stories, humans could break away from the constraints of reality while breaking away from the real world themselves. The different worlds that death and dreaming introduce to an individual were also impossible to see, just as with magic. One does not return from death, nor does one have the ability to prove or disprove the events of another’s dream. In this way, magic humans performed in death and in dreams was similar to folkloric magic in that they were potentially more powerful, and were not held up to the same level of scrutiny as in the real world.
Works Cited


Women's health has often been a taboo subject in western culture, and still we, as women, struggle to overcome stigma and body image issues when dealing with doctors and our health.¹ Within the sophisticated medical practice of ancient Egypt, by comparison, the medical papyri document deal with symptoms and treatments for various health concerns that apply exclusively to women.² Because the Egyptians believed words held power, only the most valued information was recorded, and so these documents reveal the importance of women’s health within Egyptian society.³ While male doctors were involved in the treatment of women, they showed sensitivity towards the well-being of their female patients. Within this medical culture, women themselves also acted as healers and had a voice in their own treatment.

The Egyptian doctors (called sinw) were imbedded in a bureaucratic hierarchy, with the Pharaoh’s doctor assuming responsibility for all other physicians in Egypt. Along with this responsibility, the Pharaoh’s doctor was also in charge of the health and well-being of the ruler and the royal family. He (presumably, despite there being evidence of at least one female doctor) administered the tasks of other doctors within the borders of the kingdom.⁴ This structural system within the medical profession characterizes the larger general ideals presented within the cosmic order, ma'at.⁵, ⁶ Doctors had four specializations — eye, stomach, teeth, and rectum — and were also trained in a wide variety of general health areas.⁷

There were several general areas in which all doctors were required to have training, and among these areas was gynecology.⁸ To receive this training, physicians, as well as midwives (see below), travelled to The Temple of Neith at Sais.⁹ It is important to note that, for the most part, midwives or other women treated minor female health problems, and so women created their own safe community within which they could ask questions and be educated about their bodies.¹⁰ On the other hand, doctors were called in for more complex medical issues, for example, if there were complications with a pregnancy, or if the patient suffered from depression or menopausal symptoms (hot flashes, etc.).¹¹, ¹² As these last two examples show, doctors were not just treating women for fertility-related medical problems but also for a whole host of other ailments, including problems such as muscle cramping and what appears to be uterine cancer.¹³

1 Chrisler, "Teaching Taboo Topics," p. 128
2 Watterson, Women in Ancient Egypt, pp. 73-74; the principal primary sources are The Kahun Papyrus (trans. Quirke) and The Papyrus Ebers (trans. Bryan from Joachim’s German translation).
3 Pinch, Egyptian Myth, p. 21.
5 The term Ma'at is translated as “truth” or “order;” see Faulkner, A Concise Dictionary, 101-102. There is also an overall cultural connotation of the word ma'at personified in the goddess of the same name. This also carried into everyday life as one was supposed to live with order, and the Pharaoh was to rule with ma'at; see Teeter, The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt.
6 Watterson, Women in Ancient Egypt, pp. 74.
7 Watterson, Women in Ancient Egypt, p. 74.
8 Watterson, Women in Ancient Egypt, p. 43.
9 Watterson, Women in Ancient Egypt, p. 44.
10 In Papyrus Ebers there is a description of symptoms similar to what we now call menopause: see The Ebers Papyrus, p 87.
11 Watterson, Women in Ancient Egypt, p. 80; and The Papyrus Ebers, trans. Bryan, p. 87.
Physicians listened to women who described their symptoms and used their accounts as a diagnostic tool. After receiving this information, doctors would consult a medical papyrus, which documented a list of symptoms and treatments, in order to reach a diagnosis. The Kahun Papyrus and Papyrus Ebers are among the most significant sources of medical texts that discuss gynecology. The former considers a wide range of women’s health problems, while the latter is concerned with fertility and childbirth.

Modern commentators today suggest that Egyptian doctors believed that the womb actually moved within the body, a belief shared by Ancient Greek physicians. Scholars who have identified the Egyptian medical term “disturbance of the womb” in the Kahun Papyrus, have interpreted the idea to mean depression. The Egyptians prescribed a salve as treatment for depression, using a pharmacological solution. During the Victorian era, by comparison, the equivalent disease, known as “hysteria,” was treated in a much more archaic manner. The Victorian approach for mild cases of hysteria was the application of clitoral stimulation with the thought that the womb would shift into place. In extreme cases of hysteria, a court order was given for surgical sterilization by removal of the womb, often without the consent of the women.

Egyptian midwives, not doctors, held the medical information and controlled access to methods of contraception, and therefore women could control their own bodies. There are three types of contraception for women used by the Egyptians that are known to scholars. Two of these methods, one consisting of crocodile dung and honey and the other being mainly plant-based, are pharmacological in nature. Modern scientists have found that some ingredients used in these remedies, such as acaçia, which is still used in some spermicides today, have spermicidal qualities. From a modern perspective, these techniques reveal that the Egyptians were far more medically progressive than their Greek counterparts, who prescribed squatting on the ground and sneezing to release the seminal fluid from the vagina. The third method of contraception recommended by Egyptian midwives was to breastfeed children until the age of three, preventing menstruation for that period and, in turn, ovulation. Because women had a variety of contraceptive options, they could control their own bodies; however, there are no known methods of contraception for men, and so the onus was squarely and solely on the women to protect themselves.

In cases of unwanted pregnancy, the Egyptians had three known procedures for termination. Some scholars have suggested that the Egyptians may have also had a type of ancient morning after pill. Papyrus Ebers documents the medical procedure for ending a pregnancy. The document is organized within the papyrus by medical procedure, such that each procedure is described using the Egyptian medical term for the disease, often in the form of a title. The symptom and

---

14 Watterson, Women in Ancient Egypt, p. 80.
15 The Medical texts examined were written in a formal style. They always start by describing symptoms that vary based on the situation (they can be anywhere from sight- to scent-based). The passage then goes on to say what to do for treatment. Treatments can be anything from the application of salves (pharmacological) to massages.
16 Shephard, An Illustrated History of Health and Fitness, p. 90.
17 See Shephard, An Illustrated History of Health and Fitness, p. 90, for a list of references to these primary sources; also Watterson, Women in Ancient Egypt, p. 81.
19 Watterson, Women in Ancient Egypt, pp. 80-81.
20 Watterson, Women in Ancient Egypt, p. 86.
22 Watterson, Women in Ancient Egypt, p. 44.
23 Robins, Women in Ancient Egypt, pp. 79-80; and Watterson, Women in Ancient Egypt, pp. 88-89.
25 Robins, Contraception and Abortion, p. 128.
26 Watterson, Women in Ancient Egypt, p. 88.
27 Robins, Women in Ancient Egypt, p. 80.
28 Robins, Contraception and Abortion, pp. 71-72.
29 Watterson, Women in Ancient Egypt, p. 88.
30 Robins, Contraception and Abortion, pp. 71-72.
31 Robins, Women in Ancient Egypt, p. 89.
The treatment are given below, sometimes with more than one symptom and treatment listed. The first title concerning abortion is, "Induce a woman to drop forth to the ground." Here, in the context of abortion, the language seems to suggest the woman is experiencing sudden or traumatic pain. I propose that this may be the ancient Egyptian way to describe a miscarriage at a late stage of pregnancy because of the dramatic physical reaction that women experience in that context. The word "induce" implies that the procedure was done for the deliberate removal of the foetus.

The second title concerning abortion is: "To expel what is in her abdomen." In this category of abortion, the description suggests the removal of a foetus from the womb perhaps during mid-term pregnancy. Here, unlike in the more extreme case described above, the description is not as visceral and may suggest a woman in an earlier stage of pregnancy.

The third title is: "To extract [menstrual] blood." Compared to the previous two procedures, this has the most benign description and is very similar to abortion procedures from this century. During the earlier stages of pregnancy, if a miscarriage occurs, it could be mistaken for an especially heavy flow during menstruation (called menorrhagia). This depiction is consistent with an abortion or miscarriage in the early term.

There is little known about menstruation in ancient Egypt, and what little we do know is vague. Beyond what is believed to be the recording of rudimentary reusable sanitary napkins on a royal laundry list, there is little information on the standard practices and symptomatic treatment of menstruation. The social stigma of menstruation is not well understood for the same reason. The main primary sources on the social treatment of menstruating women are fragmented and unclear. One source from Deir el-Medina insinuates that women may have had to leave the community to go to a place called the "house of women" during menstruation. This text is very fragmented and unclear as to why these women would need to isolate themselves. The other sources that refer to menstruation are contained in an administrative text from Deir el-Medina, which lists the attendance of male workers who have missed work because their wives or daughters are menstruating. There is some speculation from scholars on why this was necessary. One theory suggests that male workers were absent because women, when menstruating, were believed to be both "unclean" and capable of transferring this uncleanliness to the male workers in their households, whose absence became a preventative measure. This idea has historical merit as it is practiced in many other neighbouring cultures of the period. But it is still a problematic hypothesis because the days of missed work on the document do not appear consecutively every month or for every worker. When the absences do appear, they do not typically cover a four- to seven-day period, the common length for menstruation, but rather only a day at a time. A more likely theory is that on days when women of the house experienced extreme cramping or other severe symptoms brought on by menstruation, men would stay home to help them with their chores or other daily tasks. This practice would account for only a few days being missed and for why the absences did not happen consistently every month or for every worker. This explanation would also show that women were supported at home and within the community for distinctly female medical conditions.

---

30 Riddle, Contraception and Abortion, pp. 71-72.
31 Safe Abortion, 2, Clinical Care for Women Undergoing Abortion.
32 Robins, Women in Ancient Egypt, pp. 78-79.
33 McDowell, Village Life in Ancient Egypt, p. 36.
A missed menstrual cycle was considered to be the first sign that a woman was pregnant.\textsuperscript{35} This acknowledgement shows that women were educated about their bodies. In addition, there was a secondary test that could be performed, which is described in the Kahun Papyrus as the insertion of an onion or garlic clove (depending upon the translation) into the vagina.\textsuperscript{36} It was thought by Egyptian Physicians that the onion or garlic scent would travel to the woman’s mouth if she were pregnant and so confirm the pregnancy.\textsuperscript{37} But, as with many other gynaecological problems and diseases, doctors were only called in for major tasks, like repairing a prolapsed uterus or inducing labour; for any minor medical concerns, like determining pregnancy, women depended upon midwives.\textsuperscript{38}

In Egyptian mythology, a story documented in Westcar Papyrus describes the birth of Royal triplets. Here, the mother in labour is helped by three goddesses who act as midwives for the royal family: Nephthys, Meskhenet and Heqet.\textsuperscript{39} This myth reveals the vital role that midwives played in childbirth and in the community of women. Modern historians have suggested that this myth is representational of how Egyptians may have dealt with childbirth.

An important artifact that may have been used in childbirth is the Abydos birth brick. Its decorations are cultic in nature while its graphics and iconography share similarities with the commonly found "Magic Wands" used during childbirth that were thought to provide the mother and child with protection. Though the brick does not show a woman in labour, one image reveals a mother receiving her child from two female attendants, suggesting that every aspect of childbirth was exclusively managed by female medical experts.\textsuperscript{40} This source reveals the importance that women retained through midwifery.

The ancient Egyptian society has shown an openness and willingness to support and treat women. Their treatment, as described in the various medical papyri, reveals a systematic and scientific approach to women’s health, especially in relation to their Greek counterparts. This suggests that Egyptian culture took the issues and concerns of women’s health very seriously. Many other cultures however, including those in contemporary society, have not always demonstrated the desire to understand women’s health, particularly those issues which focus on contraception and abortion.
Works Cited


Apocalyptic Literature in Mesopotamia 1500-100 BCE

Prophetic literature, and its sub-genre of apocalyptic literature, is most commonly associated with works in the Bible. While this association has long existed in both academia and the public sphere, extra-Biblical prophecy is referenced in the Bible itself, which means that it was known to exist long before it was found in the Bible.¹ The term Chaldean, which has been found even in ancient texts, elicits imagery of an astrologer or diviner in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.² Some of the first documents containing prophetic words were found by the middle of the 19th century in the 18th century BCE archives at Mari. Others, comprising divine messages to the Assyrian kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal from the 7th century BCE, were excavated at Nineveh.³ Elements of Assyrian and Babylonian language also evidence a culture of prophets and prophecy in a way that is comparable to the Bible.⁴ The Babylonian word mubbu is related to the root mabu, meaning “to become crazy or go into a frenzy,” and is used to refer to individuals who would receive prophecies unprompted and then retell those prophecies as a service that was generally restricted to a temple setting. In Neo-Assyrian sources, the standard word for prophet is raggimu, from the root ragamu, meaning “to shout or proclaim.” These were evidently devotees of Istar of Arbela, since they usually transmitted her words. Writings about the raggimu reveal a hierarchy within the prophetical profession, since they suggest that the raggimu had higher status than the mubbu. Sources from Mari also use the term apalu, meaning ‘to answer,’ which refers to individuals who travelled the land answering questions that required divine answers.⁵ While it is no object of debate that many Mesopotamian works are prophetic, for decades scholars have been unable to agree on and employ an apocalyptic genre within the same context. Therefore, divisive literary analyses regarding the genre itself need to be brought together and used to evaluate the apocalyptic nature of the texts currently sparking debate: the four texts known classically as A, B, C (Sulgi), and D (Marduk); the Dynastic Prophecy; and the Uruk Prophecy. Based on authoritative literary analyses of Biblical works and the parameters they dictate for the apocalyptic genre, texts A and B and the Marduk Prophecy do not qualify as apocalyptic, but the Sulgi, Uruk, and Dynastic Prophesies do. However, texts A, B, and the Marduk Prophecy bear such a significant resemblance to true apocalypses that coincidence can be ruled out. The pattern of literary development seen through the texts provides a link between Mesopotamian and classical apocalypses. It is not fitting to leave these texts outside of the apocalyptic genre since they are clearly important to its development. For this reason, they should be termed “proto-apocalypses,” to clearly reference their ancestral relationship to the genre.

---

³ Nissinen, Seow, and Ritner, Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 2.
⁵ Nissinen, Seow, and Ritner, Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 3.
The challenge in applying most scholarly debate on apocalyptic literature to Mesopotamian literature is that the texts being considered can predate apocalyptic literature by hundreds of years. The historical and cultural contexts are categorically different, so generalizing the criteria of the genre as much as possible is necessary to define it for the current purpose. To start building this generalized definition, a useful authority is John Collins’s controversial article *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre* (1979). In it, Collins defines a literary genre as “a group of texts marked by distinctive recurring characteristics which constitute a recognizable and coherent type of writing, which don’t necessarily have to have always been separate works, nor do they have to be similar based on historical context.” However, trying to refine this idea into a genre for apocalyptic literature can easily result in a fuzzy confusion of disorganized language. ‘Apocalypse’ is derived from the Greek word for revelation, but it is most commonly used in a restricted sense originating from the opening verse of the Book of Revelation. This modern classification has come to describe divine proclamations regarding the end of the world. Ancient Jewish texts that contain ‘apocalypse’ in their titles and several books almost always included in discussion of apocalyptic literature do not necessarily fit that description. This failure to accurately classify a genre of literature that seems immediately identifiable stems from the failure to observe that not every text that expresses cosmic eschatology can be classified as an apocalypse, and reciprocally, that not every apocalyptic text needs to express cosmic eschatology. Collins goes further to define the necessary rules of apocalyptic literature in as general terms as possible:

‘Apocalypse’ is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.

Based on this definition, to be defined as apocalyptic a text must contain most of (but not necessarily all) the following: a narrative describing a revelation of historical, cosmic, political, or personal eschatological events; an otherworldly source of and a human recipient for the narrative; and the prediction of a future eschatological salvation. Adela Yarbro Collins functionally expands on this definition with her own more recent take almost a decade later, describing an apocalypse as a text “intended to interpret present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority.” These definitions show the strict nature of the classification of the traditional collection of apocalyptic texts while also expanding the classification for evaluation as a legitimate genre, rather than a subjective group.

The major Mesopotamian texts whose respective statuses as apocalypses are disputed are the four texts analyzed by Grayson and Lambert in 1964 as “Akkadian Prophecies” — texts A, B, C, and D — and the Uruk and Dynastic prophecies, which were added to the dispute soon after. Texts A and D were found at Assur; six copies of text B were found in Assurbanipal’s library and the Kouyunjik library; and copies of text C have been found at both Assur and Nineveh. The texts are all phrased in present-future tense, with the exception

---

7 Ibid., 2.
8 Ibid., 3.
9 Ibid., 9.
10 Ibid., 10.
of the mythological section of text B, and are composed of simple yet vague declarative sentences that don’t mention omens or laws, but which often use phraseology similar to omen literature. The sentences primarily declare the locations and lengths of different reigns. The texts use the same pseudonymity, sometimes the same pseudepigraphy, and the same vaticinium ex eventu prophecy as Biblical apocalypses. By estimating their historical contexts, historians can even determine that these texts served a propagandistic purpose in the same way as the Biblical texts.

Before analyzing each text individually, it is worthwhile to clarify that these texts contain political eschatology rather than cosmic eschatology, due to the differences between the Babylonian and Assyrian cultures and the cultures of the ancient Jews and Christians. In the Mesopotamian context, a savior king bringing stability to the region after a catastrophic time of turmoil, allowing for infinite continuation of the status quo, is equivalent to a messianic age.

Text A, found at Assur, is composed of repetitive phrases describing the reigns of different kings and is divided into unequal sections by horizontal lines. Each section begins with the phrase, “A prince will arise and rule for [N] years,” and then goes on to describe major events that took place during that time. There is only one exception in which a “prince will arise but his days will be short and he will not be master of the land.” Interestingly, the reigns are judged as “good” or “bad” by the author, but not the events themselves. A tally of all legible sections of the text finds six “bad” reigns and three “good” ones.

The nature of the readable sections of the text, the simple descriptions of reigns of various length, does not allow for the text to be deemed apocalyptic. Not only is there no personal, political, or cosmic eschatology—the most obvious characteristic of apocalyptic literature—but there is also no mention of a narrative being transmitted from a divine being to a human recipient, as required by Collins’s definition. This text could possibly be characterized as an oracle, since the information is not mediated but does seem prophetic in nature, but it cannot be worked into the strict framework of the apocalyptic genre. However, the concept of discussing the rise and fall of kings is common in apocalyptic literature. Since text A has this in common with apocalyptic literature, it might be the earliest step in Near Eastern literature towards apocalypticism.

More copies of text B have been found than of any other text discussed here. Text B is divided into three sections but unfortunately it is still unclear whether the first and third sections, as they are not well preserved, are from the same series as the middle section. The readable portions of the first and third sections describe and judge the reigns of kings, but, unlike in text A, the information is presented as a continuous narrative and in a pattern of alternating good and bad reigns. The middle section, the most well-preserved section, presents mythological characters in an earthly setting as a prologue to the prophecy proper. In this prologue, the gods Anu-Rabu and Enlil discuss the need to return order to the region. Order will be restored but good and bad reigns will then alternate until, at the end of the final bad reign, Amorites will attack and the king and his subjects will flee. This text presents the information as a narrative, involves otherworldly beings, and includes political eschatology, but the
information is transferred from deity to deity as opposed to the deity-to-human transmission stated in the definition. If it does in fact originate from a date later than text A, it shows a possible natural evolution toward the apocalyptic genre, gaining more and more of the necessary conventions.

Text C, the third of the original four disputed texts, has come to be known as the Sulgi Prophecy for the king who narrates the main section. It is ascribed to the second dynasty of Isin and is likely connected to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I. Like text B, it is composed of continuous narration and alternating “good” and “bad” reigns. The first legible lines discuss a time in which “friend will turn on friend,” cities will be destroyed, and the reign of the king of Babylon will come to an end by Enlil’s decree. The next section describes a time in which the shrines of Girsu and Lagash will be rebuilt. After an illegible section, another “good” time is described, followed by a time in which the builder of a palace will be unhappy and there will be such disorder and hunger in the land that people will resort to cannibalism and Assyrians will sack Babylon. This historical introduction is followed by a first-person narrative by King Sulgi “predicting” his deeds and the general course of Babylonian history in the second millennium. It culminates by predicting the ascension of a leader who will rebuild all shrines and restore order to the country. It is unclear whether Sulgi’s predictions are revealed to him by a god, but the outline of the text is precisely what one might describe as classically apocalyptic, satisfying most of Collins’s definition: the establishment of historical context followed by the prediction of future events, ending in a time of salvation founded by the ascension of the savior king.

The fourth text of the series first analyzed by Grayson and Lambert in the 1960’s is known as text D, or the Marduk Prophecy. It is, like the Sulgi Prophecy, thought to be connected to Nebuchadnezzar I of the second dynasty of Isin. Like the others, this text predicts the rise of a king that will bring peace, stability, and prosperity to the region, but it has several distinctive elements. Marduk speaks in the first person. He narrates an autobiography that discusses both his history as a wanderer suffering a self-imposed exile and the bad times in Babylonia that accompanied his absence. Interestingly, the places Marduk would visit in his exiles were under his control. This autobiography is followed by a prediction that a good king will rise who will restore the cult of Marduk to its glory and thereby establish a period of peace and plenty in the land. Unlike the other texts of this disputed genre, the time described in the Marduk Prophecy can be correlated with historical chronicles and therefore can be confidently dated. The three times Marduk left Babylon can be connected to the three times his statue was removed from Babylon: by Mursili I of Hatti (1620-1590), Tikulti-Ninurta of Assyria (1243-1207), and Kutir-Nahhunte of Elam (1155-1150). Since Nebuchadnezzar I was responsible for Marduk’s elevation within the Babylonian pantheon and for the statue’s return from Elam, and since the text mentions events prior to his reign but not after it, this text certainly acts on a political agenda supporting Nebuchadnezzar I’s rule and religious reforms. This text offers ample material for analysis, but it cannot be included as an apocalypse as it lacks some key components. There is a political eschatology involved in the mention of

23Ibid, 11.
24Ibid, 11.
26Ibid., 225.
27Chavalas, Historical Sources in Translation, 170.
28Kaufman, “Prediction, Prophecy, and Apocalypse,” 222.
29Ibid, 222.
30Chavalas, Historical Sources in Translation, 8.
31Chavalas, Historical Sources in Translation, 170.
Nebuchadnezzar’s rise to power and prosperous reign, but this narrative is spoken in first person by a deity. Without revelation from a deity to a human mediator, an integral characteristic of apocalyptic literature, the Marduk Prophecy does not qualify as such.

Outside of the original four disputed texts, the Uruk and Dynastic Prophecies were added into the same group about a decade later. The Uruk Prophecy was found at Uruk, belonging to the scholarly library of Anu-iksur, found in 1972 during German excavations.\(^{35}\) It predicts the reigns of various unnamed kings, all “bad,” during which time Lamassu will be removed from Uruk to Babylon. This removal is followed by the rise of a good king and his son, who will return Lamassu to Uruk and whose dynasty will last forever, allowing them to rule like gods.\(^{36}\) The exile and return of Lamassu to Uruk is also described in the inscriptions of Nabonidus and is attributed to Eriba-Marduk of the Sealands and Nebuchadnezzar II, respectively.\(^{37}\) Due to the ending of the text in which the dynasty of the savior king is said to be established from then on, it is evident that this text was meant as political propaganda for the son of Nebuchadnezzar II. However, this text apparently did not complete its intended purpose since Awel-Marduk was assassinated by Neriglissar, and the prosperity predicted for his reign never came to pass. While it did not serve its purpose in antiquity, this text can now serve as an exemplar for Mesopotamian apocalyptic texts. It is indisputably eschatological in nature, and its pseudonymity works in its favour in lieu of its lack of revelation. This pseudonymity is reminiscent of some classical apocalypses, allowing this text the most secure classification as an apocalypse of any of the texts discussed here.

The final text belonging to this group of disputed texts is the Dynastic Prophecy. While it bears significant resemblance to the other texts, it has distinct elements that bear a far greater resemblance to Daniel than any of the others, allowing it to shed more light on the Mesopotamian apocalypses as a genre.\(^{38}\) The prophecy is divided into columns, each of which describes the fall and subsequent rise of an empire. No names are given in the traditional style, but there is enough information to determine, with near certainty, which empires are being described. The first column discusses the fall of Assyria and the rise of Babylonia; the second, the fall of Babylonia and the rise of Persia; the third, the fall of Persia and the rise of Macedonia; and the fourth, being inadequately preserved, might talk about the rise of the Seleucids. Like in the previous texts, the reigns and empires considered are designated “good” or “bad.” After the fourth column, there are two remaining sections outside of the prophecy proper. The first states that the preceding text is a secret of the gods that must not be revealed to the uninitiated, an idea not uncommon in late Babylonian texts. The last section of the text is a colophon.\(^{39}\) Since the Dynastic Prophecy is significantly younger than the other texts described here, it gives significant insight into Babylonian sentiment in the Hellenistic period and represents a key step in the evolution of apocalyptic literature. Conceptually, discussing ideas like the rise and fall of empires is similar to Daniel and strongly shows that the style might have its origins in Mesopotamian chronography.\(^{40}\) The rubric at the end of the text concerning its secrecy and its status as the information of the gods parallels the commandment at the end of Daniel that the book be kept sealed. The main difference between the Dynastic Prophecy and the other possible apocalypses is another similarity the text has with classical apocalyptic literature.

\(^{35}\) Kaufman, “Prediction, Prophecy, and Apocalypse,” 223.
\(^{36}\) Chavalas, Historical Sources in Translation, 170.
\(^{39}\) Grayson, Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts, 27.
\(^{40}\) Ibid., 21.
The Marduk and Sulgi texts end their *ex eventu* prophecies in their prophets’ times, but the author of the Dynastic Prophecy appears to attempt real prophecy by predicting the transition from Macedonian to Seleucid control. A real attempt to predict, preceded by pseudo-predictions, is a common characteristic of classical apocalypses that is missing from texts A-D and the Uruk Prophecy. The Dynastic Prophecy’s clear stylistic resemblance to classical apocalypses, especially Daniel, shows that all of these texts fit into the evolution and establishment of apocalyptic thought and literature in the ancient Near East.

Some scholars have questioned just how worthwhile it is to force historical texts into our own conventions in this way. Their position argues that labelling texts as apocalyptic changes the functional role of classification from a tool of description to that of critical categorization for the sake of categorization. While that may be true, the technique remains useful because it allows us to bring ancient literary works into terms that are relevant to us. By identifying these texts as proto-apocalypses and true apocalypses, however early in maturity, we can compare and contrast the sociological and political circumstances of the authors. To see the grouping of historical texts into genres as a reduction is the same as seeing the labelling of a vast landscape such as Mesopotamia, and its many tribes and peoples, as a reduction for our own scholarly purposes. We can view history only insofar as we are able to connect with and understand it; by bringing together texts that are similar, we learn about the evolution of human expression. The Mesopotamian apocalypses and proto-apocalypses are phylogenetic links to a widely studied genre that has captivated imaginations for centuries, causing us to wonder where our world is headed. Apocalyptic literature allows us to understand how the collective anger caused by political upheaval in a region leads to people searching for salvation — in other words, a time when peace and order will be restored. In the same way that it would be inappropriate to call one of our own evolutionary ancestors human, so too would it be inappropriate to call the proto-apocalypses true apocalypses. However, it would be just as inappropriate to leave them out of the discussion completely. The proto-apocalypses, texts A and B and the Marduk Prophecy, and the true apocalypses of Mesopotamia, the Sulgi, Uruk, and Dynastic Prophecies, are ancestral links to the classical apocalypses. They are crucial to our understanding of both the classical apocalypses themselves and the people they might have guided through the transitions that changed the nature of their worlds and ours.

---

Works Cited


On Wives, Husbands, and Letters: Female Literacy and Self-Determination in Old Assyria

Loreina Jones

Old Assyria During the Old Assyrian period, a group of traders who were originally from Assur founded a colony over 1000 kilometers away in Kanesh, an area in the Anatolian region. The traders set up a second home there where they resided for many years, and as a result their families, left behind in Assur, had to fend for themselves. These traders also took second wives in Kanesh with whom they had second families. Many of the tablets that have been found in the remains of the traders’ homes and businesses in Kanesh contain the personal correspondence of family members, especially between the traders and their wives in Assur. Unlike the tablets found in the ruins of the royal palaces that give us an insight into the lives of the royal women, these tablets are a unique source of insight for modern scholars into the lives of ordinary women. However, as the vast majority of these letters are from the women in Assur, information about the women in Kanesh is somewhat limited.¹,² But the letters do show us the family obligations of men and women in this period, as well as detailed aspects of the lives of the women in Assur that might apply to their contemporaries in Kanesh, which makes these letters an extremely valuable resource. To find out about the women of Kanesh, however, scholars must also look to other sources, such as wills and marriage and divorce contracts.

Archaeologists over the last century have recovered whole archives of tablets left behind in the ruins of Kanesh. These archives sometimes cover many generations of a family, and that has permitted scholars to develop a timeline of events that happened in both their business dealings and family lives.³ In one of these archives, there is a letter written by Ummi-Ishara, a woman living in Assur, in which she pleads with her younger sister Salimma in Kanesh to return to Assur and to her husband.⁴ Another document in the archive provides evidence that Salimma did indeed return to Assur.⁵ Out of the thousands of letters found at Kanesh, only a small percentage were written by women. Scholars have concluded that they were indeed written by women since they include both family-related issues and more emotion than those that strictly refer to business matters. They are also not as grammatically correct as those written by men as they are written in a colloquial tone.⁶ Cecile Michel believes that it may be possible to determine that a woman wrote the letters by examining the written symbols themselves. In the letters known to be written by a woman named Tarisa, Michel observes that the symbols are “clear, small and elegant.”⁷

³Larsen, Kanesh: A Merchant Colony in Bronze Age Anatolia, 203.
⁵Ibid., 291.
⁶Larsen, Kanesh: A Merchant Colony in Bronze Age Anatolia, 05.
During this period, marriages were usually monogamous, but the situation that arose in Kanesh with husbands being away from their wives in Assur led to a bending of this rule. One’s wife in Assur was referred to as the *assutum* or “first wife,” while the new wife in Kanesh was called the *amtum*, which originally meant “slave-girl” but came to denote “second wife.” These relationships with the *amtum* may have arisen when the first generation of traders arriving in Kanesh developed relations with the local women. This dynamic may have changed in later generations as the sons of the *amtum*, marrying into local Anatolian families, may have taken their first and only wives in Kanesh. To prevent the appearance of bigamy, the *assutum* and *amtum* could not reside in the same city. A marriage contract between the Assyrian trader Assur-malik and an Anatolian woman named Suhkana stipulates that, while he may take her with him on his travels in Anatolia, he must not take her to Assur where his wife resides. Similarly, in the previously mentioned letter from sister to sister, Ummi-Ishara cites Salimma’s husband’s comment that, since Salimma was not his *amtum* wife, there should be no restrictions on her coming to him in Assur.

The different wives had slightly different roles depending on their location. First and foremost, a wife’s role in whichever location was to provide a home for her husband. This obligation can be seen in a letter sent by a man in which he demands that the girl promised to him come to his side immediately and be his wife, since he was alone and there was no one to look after him. Secondly, it was the wife’s job to provide the husband with male heirs so that the family lineage could continue. If she were to fail at this task, the husband could either divorce her or take a slave girl to have children with. This provision can be seen in numerous marriage contracts. Marriages during this period can be seen mostly as business alliances between families that would strengthen both families’ economic ties. For example, in a letter in which a father is arranging his daughter’s marriage to the addressee’s son, the father places the most emphasis on the connection being created between himself and his daughter-in-law: the tone and structure of the letter emphasizes their connection as businessmen; while the sender starts to call the recipient “brother,” emphasizing their connection as family.

The *assutum* wives in Assur not only raised their children but also acted as their husbands’ local business partners. It is in the correspondence between these women and their husbands in Kanesh that we find some of the best insights into the women’s lives. Their main role in the family businesses was to produce the cloth that their husbands would trade for other goods in Anatolia. Since women and their husbands would write to each other to discuss the demand for more or better cloth, numerous letters refer to the production of this cloth. Some of the letters show how exasperated the women could get from the instructions they received from their husbands. In one letter, a woman named Lamassi states that her husband, Pusu-ken, complained that the pieces of cloth she sent were too small, but she claims that he was the one who requested the size reduction. Also, she angrily reminds him that she is the one who has to clothe their children, and she quips that the difference in cloth had been used for this purpose. Part of the women’s role in textile production was to arrange for the transportation of their
textiles to their husbands in Kanesh. In another letter, Lamassi advises Pusu-ken that she has had problems finding people to transport the cloth and that she has done her best to ensure that each caravan leaving for Kanesh contains some cloth from her that he can sell.19

Along with producing cloth for the family business, women had to maintain the family home, which usually belonged to their husbands’ family. A topic that appears regularly in the correspondence is the concern that women had over not having enough money. It was difficult to have enough to ensure the smooth running of the business and the household. In one letter, a mother writes to her son that, in an attempt to ward off damage to the home, she had new brickwork done and needed money for the beams she ordered.20 In the archive of Assur-taklaku, there are a number of letters that are written by Assur-taklaku’s sister Tarisa about her attempts to pay off their father’s debts and save the family home in Assur. Tarisa resided in Assur and ran the family textile business there, organising production and transportation of the goods to Assur-taklaku in Kanesh. Therefore, it was Tarisa who was in daily contact with the people who were demanding payment for her father’s outstanding debts. Assur-taklaku insisted that it was imperative that she do everything possible to save the home, but it would seem that Tarisa felt he was not contributing enough to the effort. Unlike other women, it appears that Tarisa was totally independent, eventually moving to Kanesh herself. She may have been a “consecrated” woman, who as a young girl was given to the god Assur, and therefore never had to marry.21

These letters show that the women were doing their best to protect their homes, on behalf of their husbands, sons, and fathers, from ruin and from those who wished to claim the homes to settle outstanding debts. Unfortunately, in some cases women did get thrown out of their homes, as seen in a letter found in the Imdilum archive written by a woman named Sat-ili. In her letter, which is addressed to a man named Anali who may have been her brother, she states that she has been thrown out and is now living outside, and she begs him to take care of her.22 With their husbands away from home for years on end, the women in Assur were vulnerable to debt collectors, be they businessmen or representatives of the city. A woman was much easier to pressure for money without her husband, especially with the threat of seizure of her textiles and her home.23

Along with running the family textile business, the women of Assur were responsible for raising their children. Part of a husband’s responsibility was to ensure that his wife and children were properly fed, housed and clothed.24 But with fathers away in Kanesh for many years, this responsibility fell to mothers, which made the lack of money an even bigger concern for these women. In one letter that Taram-Kubi writes to her husband Innaya, she expresses the direness of her financial situation while admonishing her husband for his role in the matter: in response to his claim that he had left jewellery that she could sell for food, she says that he not only neglected to leave the jewellery but that he took off with all of their valuables. Therefore, she had no money for food and she had to use her own money to make payments.25 Even at a distance, a father retained legal authority over his children,26 and with that authority came certain responsibilities and with that authority came certain responsibilities. In her letter, Lamassi begs her husband to return so that he can fulfill his duty to his daughter and give her to the god Assur.27

19 Ibid., 206.
24 Michel, Women of Assur and Kanis, 126.
26 Michel, Women of Assur and Kanis, 129.
27 Larsen,  A Merchant Colony in Bronze Age Anatolia, 211.
It is clear that the women left in Assur to run the family businesses, preserve the homes, and raise the families as the assutum wives had to be very strong women on many levels. The women of Kanesh, as the amtum wives, had to be just as strong even though their lives were somewhat different. Like their Assur counterparts, these women were responsible for raising their children and for helping out with their husbands’ businesses, but in different ways. They were also expected to be involved in producing food for themselves, their husbands, and their children.

In letters from the Assur-nada archive, we have the correspondences of the Assyrian trader Assur-nada — both with his Anatolian amtum wife Sisahsusar, and with his business partners. Once in Kanesh, these Assyrian traders travelled further into Anatolia using Kanesh as their home base, leaving even their second wives at home, but unlike the wives in Assur these women saw their husbands on a more regular basis. In the letters, Assur-nada repeatedly instructs Sisahsusar and the others to collect outstanding debts, even prescribing the strong measure of having the debtors thrown in jail. Assur-nada chastises his business partners for allowing his wife to be treated badly by some of the debtors. The other focus of the letters was to instruct Sisahsusar in regards to her agricultural duties, reminding her to buy straw and oxen and to prepare the beer. The archive also contains one letter from Sasahsusar to Assur-nada in which she catalogues all of the business transactions that she had completed for her husband.

The social position of the wife in Kanesh was, as mentioned earlier, different from that of the wife in Assur. The women in Kanesh no doubt knew of their husbands’ wives and families back in Assur and that at some point their husbands, in all probability, would return there. The amtum wife was secondary, and her social inferiority could be seen in the treatment of the children that resulted from her marriage. In one painful example, the divorce settlement of Pilah-Istar and his amtum wife Wala-wala states that Pilah-Istar will take their daughter back to Assur with him. This was not an isolated incident, as there are other recorded instances of fathers returning to Assur with the children from their Anatolian marriages.

The Kanesh wives were in an even more precarious financial situation than the Assur wives, and their situation would become even worse if their husbands happened to die before writing a will. If this occurred, all of his documents and belongings would be sent back to Assur for his estate to be settled there. The families in Kanesh would have to rely on the goodwill of the families in Assur to get any inheritance at all. In one case, not only was the Assur family unwilling to help the family in Kanesh, but the Kanesh woman’s own family refused to help her. In a letter, this woman pleads with her sister for help and refers to her lack of contact with her own patrilineage.

The documents found in the archives at Kanesh, both personal and business related, give insight into the sometimes precarious lives that both Assyrian and Anatolian women led. Despite how they were clearly strong-willed, independent businesswomen who only wanted the best for their families, it must be remembered that in the end they were still very dependent on the male members of their families — not only for their futures, but for the futures of their children as well. If the businesses that were run by the male members of their families

31 Michel, Women of Assur and Kanis, 131.
32 Larsen, Kanesh: A Merchant Colony in Bronze Age Anatolia, 252.
33 Michel, Women of Assur and Kanis, 132.
34 Larsen, Kanesh: A Merchant Colony in Bronze Age Anatolia, 252.
35 Michel, Women of Assur and Kanis, 132.
36 Larsen, Kanesh: A Merchant Colony in Bronze Age Anatolia, 250.
went well, then they could be assured that there would be enough money to buy food and to keep their homes. If their husbands and fathers made sure that their wills were properly made out then they and their children would have secure futures. If not, then the city officials and others who were owed money, would arrive at the door and demand repayment as soon as the men died, which could put the women and children out on the street.

Beyond giving us insight into their daily lives, one of the most important things that these documents show us about these women is that, like their royal counterparts, they were literate. Not only were able to read and write but also they were numerically literate, which we see in how they were responsible for the financial management of their homes and family businesses.

Works Cited


