

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

FLOODING BORDERS: GENDER, HUMAN ECOLOGY, AND IDEOLOGY IN THE
PTOLEMAIC BORDER BETWEEN EGYPT AND NUBIA

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation contributes a new paradigm for understanding the ideology of the border between Egypt and Nubia through a gendered and human-ecological lens in the Ptolemaic period. Drawing on a diverse range of evidence from Egyptian iconography to Greek fiction, the dissertation re/de/constructs the multiplicity of borders accumulated in the physical and imaginary space between Egypt and Nubia. This interdisciplinary, eclectic approach to the Egyptian-Nubian border reveals unrecognized ways in which the Ptolemaic sovereigns embedded their sovereignty, their empire, and their own identity in the religious, natural, and cultural landscapes of Egypt.

Critical to this finding is the Egyptian “ecological triangle,” a conceptual model proposed in the dissertation that outlines the interconnectedness of the sovereign(s), the gods, and nature, which had fluid identity boundaries. The conception of both the Egyptian “ecological triangle” and the borders it re/de/constructs is influenced by Gloria Anzaldúa’s metaphorical use of the swamped border to reify the fluidity of identity. Also influential is the affinity between Judith Butler’s conception of gender and Thomas Nail’s conception of borders, namely that they are both fluid and performative. Fluidity, however, is not only a metaphor in this study. The Nile flood, itself a manifestation of the Egyptian “ecological triangle,” was believed to have had its source at the First Cataract of the Nile, the Egyptian southern border of Egypt *qua* Egypt.

The first three chapters explore fluid identities in the ideology of the First Cataract border in the Ptolemaic period. The first chapter analyzes gender fluidity in the syncretism of Isis with the local Cataract inundation deities in hieroglyphic Egyptian hymns and temple doorway decorations at the Temple of Isis at Philae on the southern end of the First Cataract. The second chapter argues that the Ptolemaic king embedded himself in the Egyptian “ecological triangle” in

the iconography and texts of the Temple of Isis at Aswan in response to the inundation crisis of the mid-240s BCE. The third chapter explores the popular Myth of the Sun's Eye, the iconography of which decorated temples throughout Egypt, as a border myth, which anchored Egyptian sovereignty and universal imperial ideology to the First Cataract inundation waters.

The First Cataract ecotheological border was not the only ideological conception of the border between Egypt and Nubia in the Ptolemaic period. As a counterpoint to the fluvial border, the dissertation moves to the Greek fictional imaginary in the fourth chapter, namely the fictional exchanges between Queen Kandake of Nubia and Alexander the Great in the Greek *Alexander Romance* (3.18-24). This text provides a conception of bordering that focuses on the domination, penetration, and acquisition of foreign nations' borders and wealth via tribute collection and imperial forms of autopsy. Modeled on pharaonic forms of imperialism, Alexander attempts to realize his universal imperial ideology by disguised violations against Queen Kandake, who embodies Nubia's borders and natural wealth in her black, female body.

In these gendered and human-ecological case studies, this dissertation shows that the Ptolemies constructed the ideological border between Egypt and Nubia to legitimate their sovereignty in Egypt and provide a foundation for their empire beyond Egypt. This dissertation fills a gap in the scholarship by providing the first study on the ideology of the Nubian-Egyptian border in the Ptolemaic period as well as the first study centering the intersections of gender and nature in Ptolemaic studies. Moreover, by centering the African *milieu* of Ptolemaic Egypt, this dissertation contributes to recent trends in scholarship aiming to counterbalance the Mediterranean focus of contemporary Ptolemaic studies and to diversify the study of the ancient world.

ABBREVIATIONS

Edf. = E. Chassinat, E. *Le Temple d'Edfou*

FGrH = F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*

FHN = *Fontes Historiae Nubiorum*

I.Philae = A. Bernand, *Les inscriptions grecques de Philae, I. Époque ptolémaïque*; É. Bernand, *Les inscriptions grecques et latines de Philae, II. Haut et Bas Empire*

Inscr.Métr = É. Bernand, *Inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte gréco-romaine.*

JdÉ = *Journal d'entrée, Cairo*

O.Hor = J.D. Ray, *The Archive of Hor*

P. Edfu = Papyri published in *Fouilles franco-polonaises*, Institut Français d'Archéologie du Cairo

P. Gurob = *Greek Papyri from Gurob*

P. Haun = *Papyri Graecae Haunienses*

P.Oxy = *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*

Pap. Gr. = Papyri from Trinity College Dublin

PM = B. Porter and R. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings*

I.Prose = A. Bernand, *La Prose sur pierre dans l'Égypte hellénistique et romaine*

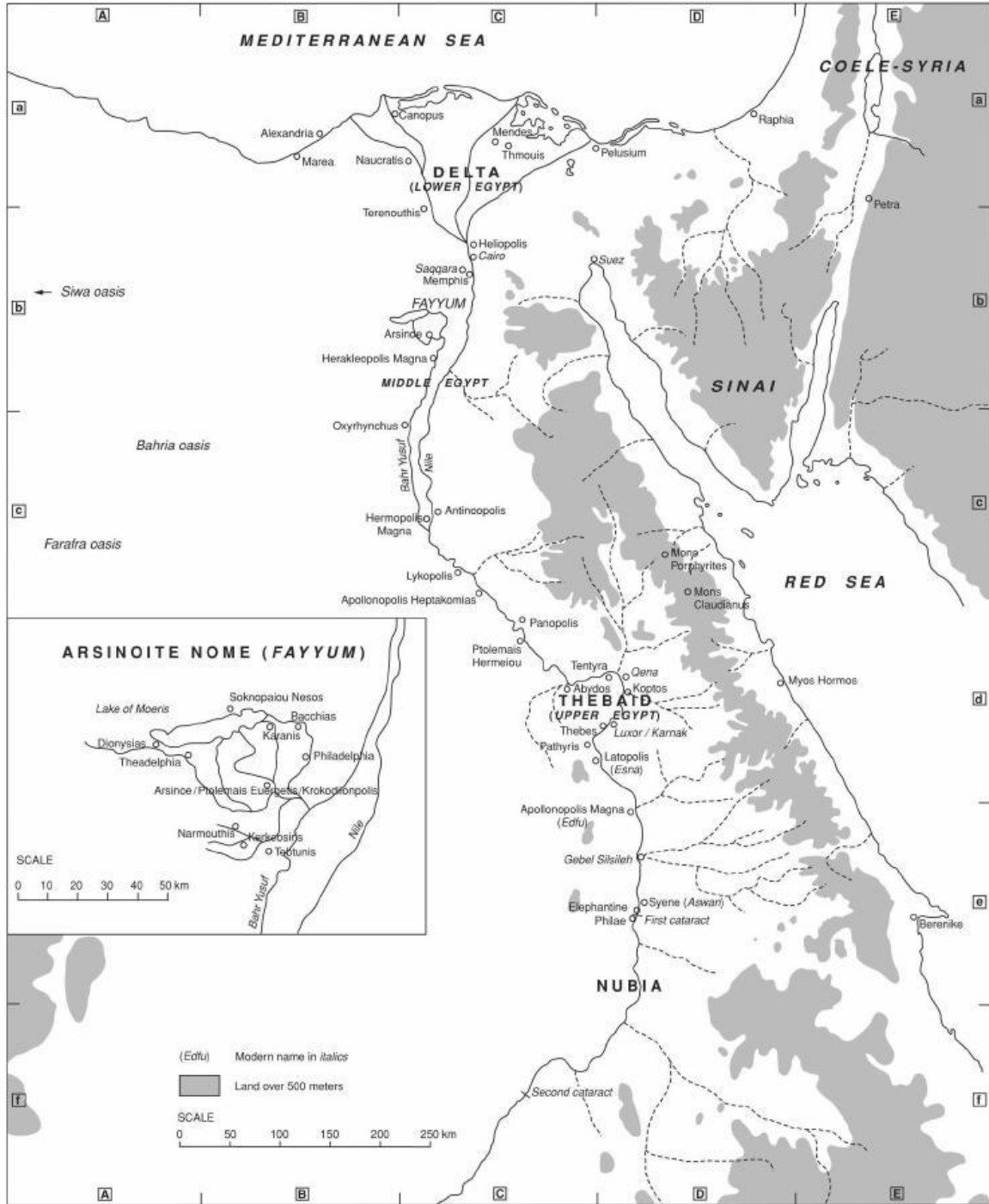
PSI = *Papyri greci e latini (Publicazione della Società Italiana per la ricerca dei papyri greci e latini in Egitto)*

SB = *Sammelbuch griechischen Urkunden aus Ägypten*

I.Th.Sy. = A. Bernand, *De Thèbes à Syène*

WB = A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache*

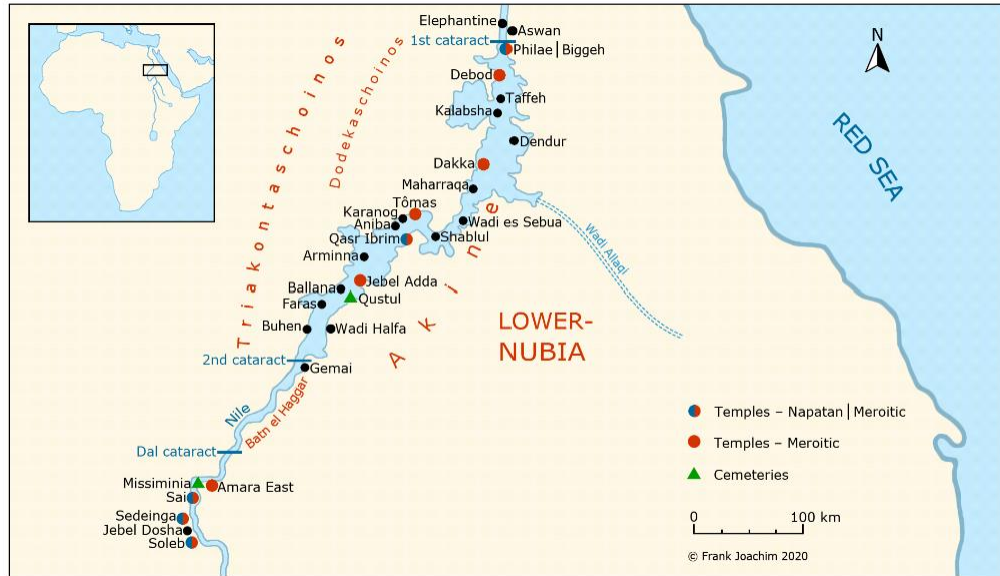
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Map 16.1. Greco-Roman Egypt
Adapted from Walbank et al. 1984: 120-1

Cambridge Histories Online © Cambridge University Press, 2008

Figure 2: Map of Lower-Nubia (Reprinted from Kuckertz, Josefine. “Meroe and Egypt.” In *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, 2021)



INTRODUCTION

In his *Natural Questions*, Seneca describes the pan-kinetic waters of the First Cataract of the Nile with its swirling and violent torrential forces¹ which numbed the senses² and hindered free movement along the Nile, Egypt's hydraulic highway.³ As a result of its position on the Nile and the natural constriction of movement, the First Cataract served as a territorial and ideological border between Egypt and Nubia. Since pre-pharaonic times, the First Cataract was imagined as the source of the Nile inundation as well as the autochthonous inundation ecotheologies⁴ accumulated in the region. The relationship between inundation and border became tied together in the social and religious imaginary of Egypt.⁵ Moreover, the rapid waters, islands, and

¹ Seneca, *Natural Questions* IVA 2.3-10; The nature of the cataract was a topic of fascination among Roman authors, see Strabo 17.48-52; Pliny the Elder *Natural History* 5.10; Seneca, *Natural Questions* IVA 2.3-10 and *Moral Letters to Lucilius* 56; Lucan, *Pharsalia* 10.307-331; Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 6.23-26; Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* 9; et al.

² In particular, the noise of the cataract was said to cause deafness in the Roman period, a fact that intrigued many travelers to the region. See Seneca, *Natural Questions* IVA 2.4; Cicero, *The Republic* VI, 18; Pliny, *Natural History* 6.181; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 22.15.9.

³ For hindered movement of the Nile, see Herodotus 2.29; Strabo 17.50; Pliny the Elder, *Natural Histories* 5.10; Seneca, *Natural Questions* IVA 2.6.

⁴ Ecotheology, sometimes referred to as “ecological religion” and “religious environmentalism,” is “concerned with the intersection of religion with nature, often, though not always, with a particular focus on environmental concerns” (Hunt and Marlow, 2020). I use the term to refer to the theologies of Egypt that intersect with nature, the environment, and ecological processes. For a good introduction to ecotheology in antiquity, see Hunt and Marlow (2020). For a broader perspective, see Gottlieb (ed.) (2006). The term autochthonous is used in part to highlight the indigenous nature of the myths meaning that they are pharaonic and even pre-pharaonic. Additionally, the term autochthonous is used for its literal Greek meaning: αὐτόχθων as “sprung from the land itself.” The use of the term nods to the ways the inundation ecotheologies are tied to the ecological landscape of the First Cataract.

⁵ See Chapter 1; E.g., in the *Famine Stele*, the raging inundation waters of the First Cataract are characterized as “a wall separating the Nubians daily” (transl. ed. Simpson, 2003, 387). Similarly, the waters of the cataract become the border between the Egyptians and the Aethiopians (a term used in Greek at times to mean the Nubians) in a Greek poem by Pseudo-Crinagoras: “Great bordering regions of the world, which the Nile, filling itself up (πιμπλάμενος), cuts off from the black Aethiopians” (Pseudo-Crinagoras, *Palatine Anthology* IX 235). In the early Roman period, the border of Egypt was linked to the worship of Isis and the waters of the Nile in a Greek poem inscribed by a visitor to the temple of Isis at Philae: “We are

mainland comprising the landscape of the First Cataract border of Egypt was ever-shifting through the constant flow of the Nile and the annual cycle of the Nile inundation.⁶ Ideologically, the natural cycle that constructed the border's flowing waters was the manifestation of the relationships between the sovereign(s), nature, and the gods—the Egyptian “ecological triangle.”⁷ Localized at the First Cataract, the inundation border functioned ideologically as a holding and releasing site of the primary creative forces of Egyptian mythology, which provided for the fertility and economic success of Egypt as well as the “cosmological and political legitimacy” of the king.⁸

This dissertation proposes an innovative ecological- and gender-informed paradigm for understanding the border between Egypt and Nubia during the Ptolemaic period. The project outlines a conceptual intervention that grounds the Ptolemaic regime and its empire in the environment of Egypt and the Nubian borderlands, which counterbalances the Mediterranean-focus in contemporary Ptolemaic studies. In a series of three case studies from the First Cataract border *milieu*, the dissertation operationalizes models of border construction and migration from

come to the limits of Egypt, to the fairest islands, / to behold the land of Isis, Inachus' daughter, and the deep stream of the Nile (Νεῖλου βαθὺ χεῦμα), which keeps Egypt prosperous year by year for the good fortune of Caesar” (*FHN* II 170; *I. Philae* II 158 I ll.1-4 =*SB* 5.8434). In a hieroglyphic inscription and accompanying relief on an exterior wall of the naos of the Ptolemaic temple at Edfu, the Nile god Hapy says to the ka of the king: “We [Hapy, Sothis, Anukis] launch for you the flood which spreads within your borders, and we resume it to make your fields green again” (PM VI 302-305; Valbelle (1981) 67; *Edf.* IV, p. 277 and 278 and pl. 93).

⁶ In this conception, I am influenced by Thomas Nail's theory of the border, which builds on Deleuze and Guattari's “Smooth and the Striated” theory of bordering (Nail, 2016; Deleuze and Guattari, 1980). Nail theorizes that a border is a process that is both accumulative and kinetic with a foundational role as a site of Marxist primitive accumulation. For Nail's discussion of primitive accumulation, see Nail (2016) 22-24. In Nail's expanded use of Marx's material use of the term, borders are not only sites of primitive accumulation of material capital but also social, political, and territorial capital. According to Marx, primitive accumulation also has a “periodicity,” meaning that “the social motion of production in general.

⁷ This concept is explained in Introduction 1.2.

⁸ Oestigaard (2011) 64.

Egyptian mythology to modern philosophy, highlighting the role of gender and the environment in the border ideology of the Ptolemaic regime. The first chapter argues that gender fluidity, namely the practice of reimagining and transcending the gender binary, became a principal feature of the Ptolemaic theology of Isis at the Egyptian southern border through which the Ptolemaic dynasty constructed their sovereignty. The second chapter investigates the response to the inundation crisis of the mid-240s BCE in the First Cataract region and argues that Ptolemy III took on a role of inundation king performing a form of masculinity that promoted a relationship of embodied association to and interconnectedness with nature. The third chapter explores the Myth of the Sun's Eye as a border myth, arguing that the popular myth placed the First Cataract border as a site of transformation and transcendence which centered the border and the pacification of Nubia in Egyptian universal kingship and Ptolemaic imperial ideology. A final case study reveals a different bordering strategy between Egypt and Nubia in the Kandake episode of the *Alexander Romance* which employed gendered portrayals of the Nubian border that subverts expected power dynamics, suggesting a heterogeneity in Ptolemaic construction of geopolitical and postmodern borders. Together these case studies form a new corpus of scholarship on the Egyptian-Nubian ideological border in the Ptolemaic period through a gendered and human-ecological lens.

1. The Nubian-Egyptian Borders

1.1 The Borders

A border is a complicated concept. It is at once geographic, political, and ideological. The polysemic term 'border' subsumes a large variation of ideas—the line on the map, the boundary between nations, the frontier, and the borderland. The scholarship on the Roman border/frontier has been most influential in organizing scholarly thought about borders and frontiers in the

ancient world.⁹ Nineteenth century colonialism had vast influence on early scholarship about ancient borders, not only in defining states as territories with linear frontiers but also using those state borders to “accentuate the moral differences in nationalities,” namely the Roman frontier as the barrier between civilization and barbarism.¹⁰ This impression, however, has been corrected in scholarship, since it is “flatly contradicted by historical, geographical studies that...rightly concludes that the [Roman] frontiers were imprecise, more zonal than linear, despite the illusion of walls.”¹¹

This zonal quality of borders and frontiers has been influential in the study of the border and borderlands between Egypt and Nubia, which “act as zones of interaction that crosscut political, social, and ethnic boundaries” and not as “a polarized opposition between colonial and indigenous populations.”¹² Despite the zonal quality of the Nubian-Egyptian borderland, there was still a “point in the Nile Valley” that could be “defended as a fortified gateway” or *tšš* in Egyptian.¹³ This gateway (*tšš*), which moved throughout Egyptian history anywhere from the

⁹ See e.g., Whittaker (1994); Rousselle (ed.) (1995) 1-16; Elton (1996); Richardson (2011); Cordovana (2012); Boozer (2013).

¹⁰ Whittaker (1994) 7f, quoting Lucien Febvre; see also Török (2008) 7-8 and (2013) 53-57.

¹¹ Whittaker (1994) 9, with reference to P. Guichonnet and Raffestin (1974).

¹² Smith (2003) 54; see also Török (2008) and (2013). For instance, in Török’s seminal study of the Nubian-Egyptian borderlands, his interest is in the “nature of the frontier zone” (Török, 2008, 9).

¹³ Török (2008) 10. For a discussion of terminology of borders, conceived as both gateways/lines and zones see Török (2008) 8; Galán (1995) 101-155. There were two major words for “border” in Egyptian: *tšš* and *ḏrw*. The difference between the terms is explained by Galán (1995) 131: “A significant difference between Egypt’s *tššw* and the *ḏrw* of foreign lands is that while the former is the result of an action, specifically stated to have been made or extended by the king or on his behalf, and which he ought to maintain and defend (since they were not fixed by a royal command), the *ḏrw* exist as its negative or passive counterpart, i.e., “what is not *tšš*.” Both terms are part of the ideal-cosmic view of Egypt’s world, as well as part of its geographical, politico-administrative, real world; and both are equally unfixed since they are adjacent in space. Both terms are associated with the king’s actions in foreign lands, although carried out in opposite directions and perceived from opposite perspectives: while the king goes forward to make or extend his *tššw*, he comes back bringing in a foreign chief’s *ḏrw*.” The *tšš* marked Egypt’s *tššw*,

First Cataract to the Fourth Cataract of the Nile, marked the extent of the Egyptian empire. In the Ptolemaic period, it fluctuated from Syene in the First Cataract to Maharraqah, known in the ancient sources as Takompo.¹⁴ This gateway (*tšš*) is discussed in this dissertation in the imperial aspects of the Ptolemaic rulers, for instance in Ptolemy III's imperial actions outside of Egypt in Chapter 2, the Eye's violent actions against the Nubians in Chapter 3, and Alexander's actions to extend his empire to Nubia in Chapter 4.¹⁵

The focus of much of this dissertation, however, is not on the *tšš* but instead on the ideological border between Egypt and Nubia at the First Cataract, which distinguished Egypt from “the extension of Egypt's *tššw*” (empire).¹⁶ At times in Egyptian history, the First Cataract acted as both the border of Egypt and the border of its *tššw*, when Egypt did not hold Lower Nubia in its empire. At other times, the First Cataract border was not the *tšš* of Egypt and functioned as delineating Egypt *qua* Egypt. This distinction has important consequence for understanding Egyptian rulership, since Egyptian rulers “kept a different relationship in respect” to Egypt and its *tššw*, on the one hand king and on the other hand ruler-overlord.¹⁷ As an ideological border, the First Cataract constructed power and organized political authority more

which was the extent of the Egyptian pharaoh's authority, which gave “him the sole right to acquire goods on a more or less regular basis (as a form of tribute or trade), which was then taken by the overlord as the sign of others being his subjects, being part of his *tšš*” (Galán, 1995, 135).

¹⁴ Dietze (1994) 101-102; Sethe (1904) 154-157. This is further confirmed by *SB V* 1918 found near Hierasykaminos, which relates Heroides, son of Demophon, as a holder of an office in the Dodekaschoinos.

¹⁵ The *tšš* / *drw* model of empire explained in fn. 13 is particularly present in Chapter 4, in which Alexander goes forward to Nubia to extend his *tššw* (his borders/empire) and comes back “bringing in the foreign chief's *drw*” (borders but also goods of the land); cf. Galán (1995) 131.

¹⁶ Galán (1995) 135.

¹⁷ Galán (1995) 135.

than it delineated space. It was a site at which the inundation was created, kingship was confirmed, Egypt was secured, and the empire was activated.

Distinguishing the border of Egypt from the border of Egypt's empire is important for studying Ptolemaic rule and rulership, given that the Ptolemies as foreign rulers had to build authority and legitimacy as both pharaohs in Egypt and rulers of an empire. The Egyptian myth of the state held that one of the roles of Egyptian pharaohs was "to define Egypt's political frontiers in their divine quality as universal rulers, their duty being to protect the ordered world (Egypt) against Chaos by fighting the enemies of the gods of Egypt and defending and expanding her boundaries."¹⁸ This study looks at how the Ptolemies used borders, especially the First Cataract border, to legitimate their rule in Egypt and create a foundation for their empire, crucial for both the success and longevity of the Ptolemaic dynasty.

Focusing on the ideological border (vs. the historical borderlands) reveals aspects of Ptolemaic border ideology that were not necessarily reflected in the lived experience of the people in the region. As Whittaker notes, "ideology is no guide to the reality of frontiers."¹⁹ In his seminal study, Török looked at the political myth of the state in the construction of the historical Nubian-Egyptian borderlands through evidence such as settlement patterns and boundary inscriptions.²⁰ This dissertation, however, looks at the ideological border through the gendered myths of the state recorded in the theology, temple decorations, and fiction of the Ptolemaic southern border.

¹⁸ Török (2008) 12.

¹⁹ Whittaker (1994) 68.

²⁰ Török (2008) 19. In Török's discussion of Nubia in his chapter "Neighbor of Ptolemaic Egypt (c. 332-30 BCE)," he focuses on settlement patterns, Ptolemaic policy and history in Lower Nubia, and the Ptolemaic and Nubian administration of the Triakontoschoinos (also called the Dodekaschoinos, or frontier zone between the First and Second Cataracts) as a province.

1.2 The Egyptian “Ecological Triangle”

This dissertation argues that the Egyptian “ecological triangle”—the interconnectedness of sovereign(s), gods, and nature—was the foundation of the ideological border between Egypt and Nubia. The basic premise of the Egyptian “ecological triangle” is that the gods provide for the fertility of the natural world and its proper functioning (e.g., the proper inundation of the Nile; the rising and setting of the Sun). The fertility of Egypt becomes food for the Egyptian population and taxes given to the sovereign(s). Thus, the natural world underwrites the sovereign(s) ability to be an effective ruler (*mnḥ*) and uphold *ma’at* (truth, justice, order), which leads to good governance, the endowment of temples, and offerings made to the gods. In return for the sovereign’s offerings, the gods continue the process by maintaining the proper functioning of nature.

The concept of the “ecological triangle” was developed in the scholarship of the Hebrew Bible.²¹ In this conception, the “ecological triangle” consists of humanity, nature, and God. The term has recently been adopted for the cultures of Greece and Rome, swapping “gods” for “God.”²² In my adoption of terminology for Egypt, I have swapped “humanity” for “sovereign(s),” since the Egyptian sovereign was considered the representative of humanity to the gods.

While the “ecological triangle” model is simple in theory, the Egyptian “ecological triangle” was more complex because the boundaries between the three categories were fluid. The sovereign(s) were semi-divine or, in the later Ptolemaic period, fully divine. Furthermore, many of the gods represented or were associated with natural phenomena, meaning that parts of nature

²¹ Wright (2004); Marlow (2009); Ibita (2020); Hunt and Marlow (2020).

²² Hunt and Marlow (2020) 2.

were deified. For instance, the god Ra was conceived as the sun; the Nile flood was deified as the god Hapy; the goddess Isis-Sothis was associated with the star Sirius. Through their divinity and associations with the gods, the sovereign(s) were also transitively associated with natural phenomena, such as Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II's identification as the Nile flood via association with Hapy in the *mammisi* of the temple of Isis at Philae.²³ As a function of the Egyptian “ecological triangle,” such associations with nature and the inundation imbued the sovereign(s) with cosmological and political power and legitimacy. As a result, the inundation waters of the First Cataract border could be viewed as a manifestation of the sovereign's power and effectiveness, linking the ideology of the border to the ideology of sovereignty.²⁴

1.3 Why Focus on Gender in a Study of Borders?

The choice to center gender as an organizing tool in the corpus of the case studies adds a nuanced perspective that reveals new aspects to the border between Egypt and Nubia in the Ptolemaic period that has stakes for understanding the border between Egypt and Nubia in other periods as well as for complicating the study of Ptolemaic rulership and gender. The choice came first because of the nature of the ideology at the First Cataract in the Ptolemaic period—e.g., the building of temples to the goddess Isis at Philae and Aswan, the importance of the daughter of Ra in the Myth of the Sun's Eye prevalent in the First Cataract, and the role of masculinity in the inundation ecotheologies.

The choice became clarified through the similarity in the ways in which gender and borders are discussed in academic literature. For instance, Judith Butler states, “Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather,

²³ Discussed in Chapter 2.5.

²⁴ Discussed in Chapter 2.2.

gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*.”²⁵ One could substitute border for gender and have a working definition for border as theorized in border studies scholarship. The link between the performativity of both gender and borders through “a stylized repetition of acts” has been noted by scholars, who use Butler’s gender theory as a model for understanding the enactment of sovereignty at borders.²⁶ This dissertation follows in this mode and extends it by using Butler’s discussion of gender not only as a model for borders but gender itself as one of the stylized acts or performances that constructs the border and thus sovereignty.

1.4 Universality and the Ideological Border at the First Cataract

As noted above, the concept of universal regency and empire is present in Egypt from the Old Kingdom and continued in the Ptolemaic dynasty, bolstered by Alexander the Great’s universal imperial ideology.²⁷ As Strootman argues, “[t]he perception of the *oikoumene* [the inhabited world] as an empire, united under the rule of a single great king, was a core element in the ideologies of the Ptolemies and Seleucids, precisely as it had been characteristic of the ideologies of the preceding Egyptian and Near Eastern monarchies for many centuries.”²⁸ A limitless world empire was fundamental to Ptolemaic ideology. Such universal imperial ideology is succinctly declared in the legend of a hymn to Isis in the central sanctuary of the temple of Isis at Philae in the First Cataract border region. In the legend, Isis speaks to Ptolemy II, “I have

²⁵ Butler (2006/1990) 191. For the theoretical relationship of gender and space, see Wrede (2015).

²⁶ Johnson et al. (2011) 66-67; Salter (2008).

²⁷ Strootman (2012) 44.

²⁸ Strootman (2012) 44.

given you all flat lands and all foreign lands; I have given you victory to the four corners of the earth.”²⁹

The world empire championed by Alexander the Great and his legacy in both Alexandrography and in the Hellenistic kingdoms differed from Egyptian universal imperial ideology in some important ways. While Egyptian universal imperial ideology was certainly supported by expanding the boundaries through imperial actions in foreign lands, the concept of the “lord of the whole world” or “victory to the four corners of the earth” had more to do with the control of the Egyptian cosmos than the literal political and/or military subjugation of the whole world.³⁰ The Ptolemies, thus, had access to different forms of universal imperial ideology that could be variously melded to their own advantage.

What was the place of borders in this universal imperial ideology? For the Romans, as Whittaker notes, “there was an unwillingness to accept that Rome had any boundaries,” noting a tension between Roman imperial expansion and the *finis imperii* (“the limits of *imperium*”).³¹ A similar tension is described and delineated by Liverani in his explication of Near Eastern ideology including Egyptian New Kingdom imperial ideology between the static and dynamic border. In the static conception, “the border of the universal empire lies fixed in its optimal

²⁹ Žabkar (1988) 47, Hymn IV. In Hymn I, Isis gives Ptolemy II the heavens and the south lands; in Hymn II, the land and the north; and in Hymn III, the foreign countries, which all make up “the four corners of the earth.” The four corners of the earth were the extremes ends of the world where four pillars held up the sky. The number four in Egyptian art and ritual “appears to connote totality and completeness” because of its association with the four cardinal directions (Wilkinson, 1994, 133-34). Wilkinson notes the importance of the Egyptian landscape in this conception stemming from the north-south orientation of the Nile paired with the east-west movement of the sun. This may have extended to the “four races of mankind”—Asiatics, Nubians, Libyans, and Egyptians—which implied “all people” when represented together.

³⁰ Galán (1995) 133: The phrase “the four corners of the earth” was not the king boasting “to be the lord of the whole world, which was known not to be the case, but of the Egyptian cosmos.” See also Galán (1995) 129-130.

³¹ The meaning (and existence) of *finis imperii* is debated, see Richardson (2011) 1-11.

position, as an ideal and cosmic border unaffected by historical accidents.”³² On the other hand, the dynamic border (ἄλῆ) is constantly being moved forward by the king to “its coincidence with the optimal, cosmic boundary of the world,” which would eliminate the “inner borders of the world.”³³ Thus, imperial expansion could only end when it met the limits of the earth.

This conception of the border of the *oikoumene* and imperial expansion is featured in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation. In Chapter 3, the Myth of the Sun’s Eye is studied as a model for Egyptian universal kingship as relying on the continuous pacification of Nubia. In Chapter 4, the Kandake episode of the Greek novel the *Alexander Romance* is analyzed as a fictional extension of Alexander’s universal empire through a Ptolemaic lens, highlighting forms of Ptolemaic imperial policy in Nubia.

The ideological border at the First Cataract, however, functioned as the border of Egypt *qua* Egypt, not the border of the extent of Egyptian imperial control. For example, the border at the First Cataract functioned in tandem with universal imperial ideology in the Myth of the Sun’s Eye discussed in Chapter 3. When the Eye, the divine daughter of Ra who had been in Nubia slaughtering Egypt’s enemies, crossed through the rapids of the First Cataract border waters, she transformed from her leonine zoomorphic form to her anthropomorphic form as a beautiful woman. Her change in identity upon crossing into Egypt marks a distinction between Egypt and the lands of Lower Nubia in Egyptian control. While Lower Nubia can come under Egyptian control, it cannot become part of Egypt. The distinction between the two occurs at the First Cataract.

³² Liverani (1990) 51.

³³ Liverani (1990) 56-57.

Moreover, the First Cataract border could act separately from universal imperial ideology, serving as an “inner-oriented,” centripetally functioning space that demarcated Egypt.³⁴ For instance, Chapter 1 looks at the First Cataract border as an ideological practice distinct from the universal imperial ideology discussed above, functioning internally to Egypt not *vis-à-vis* Nubia or an external empire. While it would have been clear to observers of the Nile at the First Cataract and obvious to many others that the Nile inundation waters came from Nubia, the inundation ecotheology of the First Cataract held that the region was the birthplace of Hapy, the deified inundation god, and thus the source of the Nile inundation, a myth which persisted for millennia and remained popular in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods.³⁵ Chapter 2 bridges the internal and external through an exploration of the inundation crisis of the mid-240s BCE and Ptolemy III’s response at the First Cataract. While his efforts in building and decorating a new temple to Isis at Aswan in the First Cataract were centered around the inundation, there was also a martial quality to the temple that linked peace, prosperity, and fertility within Egypt to universal kingship and imperial expansion, which were both ensured through the king’s relationship to Isis. This suggests that the First Cataract border functioned not only as a delineation between Egypt and Nubia or as a demarcation of Egypt but also as a place that activated Egyptian universal kingship and universal imperial ideology.

³⁴ Inner-oriented and centripetal functions of boundaries vs. the centrifugal function of frontiers is outlined by Kristof (1959) 271-274.

³⁵ cf. Török (2008) 4. The question of the sources of the Nile was perennially interesting to the Greco-Romans; see Wainwright (1953); Todd (2015) 119-166; Merrills (2017). For Hapy’s emergence out of the First Cataract, see van der Plas (1986) 172-179. Pharaonic Egyptians certainly knew about the Nile inundation beyond the First Cataract. For instance, in the ninth year of Amenemhet III’s reign in the 12th Dynasty, the “commandant of the ruler” Sebek-khu “appears superintending the king’s observations of the height of the inundation at the Second Cataract” (Breasted, 1906, 1:304, 1.680, citing Lepsius, 1842-5, II.136b).

1.5 The First Cataract Region

1.5.1 The Nile Inundation and the Border

What is the First Cataract border? The First Cataract was an area of rough waterfalls approximately twelve to fifteen kilometers stretching from Elephantine Island in the north to Philae Island in the south. This area has two major temples—the pharaonic temple of Khnum on Elephantine and the Ptolemaic temple of Isis on Philae. The First Cataract was a natural border for Egypt, since it was a geographic chokehold for Nile travel, the most efficient way to travel long distances. It was not possible to simply sail the rapids, especially given the significant concentration of rocky islands in this portion of the Nile. Herodotus relates a method of sailing in which the boat was roped on both sides to help secure it against the current. If the rope should break, however, the boat would be carried away by the strength of the current.³⁶ In addition to this method, the length of the cataract could be traveled on land. Inside a ten-kilometer defensive wall, which ran from Syene to Konosso (modern day Shellal) and protected the area against raids from the eastern desert mountains, there was a road used to avoid the cataract.³⁷ During his visit to the region, Strabo used this path to travel from Syene (ancient Aswan) to Philae in a “wagon, through a very flat country, a distance of about 100 stadia.”³⁸ Special boats were utilized to assist in navigating the difficult terrain. Pliny the Elder states that Elephantine Island was “the point of rendezvous for Ethiopian vessels, which are made collapsible for the purpose of portage on reaching the cataracts.”³⁹

³⁶ Herodotus 2.29.

³⁷ Dietze (1994) 66.

³⁸ Strabo 17.50. Dietze (1994) 66 states that the street seemed to be little used in Ptolemaic times due to lack of corresponding finds. However, Strabo is writing in the early Roman period, and it seems unlikely that the use of the road would skip the Ptolemaic period but start back up in the Roman period.

³⁹ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 5.10.59.

During the inundation, when the surging Nile water combined with the rocky outcrops of the First Cataract, the area was impassable, linking the defense of Egypt with the Nile inundation. Thus, the Nile inundation acted as a mechanism of the border at the First Cataract. As a result, the Nile inundation was an important part of the Egyptian “ecological triangle”—the interconnectedness of sovereign(s), gods, and nature—as it was the foundation of effective border control, defense, and sovereignty in Egypt.⁴⁰

The cataract inundation waters as border mechanism features prominently in ancient source material about the region in Egyptian, Greek, and Roman sources. The rest of this section discusses four such pieces of evidence dating from the Ptolemaic or early Roman periods. The first three examples relate the waters of the cataract to the southern border of Egypt and interprets the landscape through the lens of the autochthonous inundation mythologies, a fuller explanation of which will be laid out in this section.

First, in the hieroglyphic *Famine Stele*, raging waters of the cataract are characterized as “a wall separating the Nubians daily.”⁴¹ Elsewhere in the *Famine Stele*, the cataract is explicitly stated as the location where the Nile inundation erupts from deep underground caverns. Similarly, in the second case, the waters of the cataract become the borders between the Egyptians and the Aethiopians (a term used in Greek at times to mean the Nubians) in a Greek poem by Pseudo-Crinagoras: “Great bordering regions of the world, which the Nile, filling itself up (πιμπλάμενος), cuts off from the black Aethiopians.”⁴² Although he does not mention the

⁴⁰ See Chapter 2.2 and 2.5 for a discussion of the relationship between kingship and the inundation.

⁴¹ transl. ed. Simpson (2003) 387. Presumably, the raging waters of the cataract were separating the Nubians from the Egyptians.

⁴² Pseudo-Crinagoras, *Anth. Pal.* IX 235. Ἄγχοιροὶ μεγάλοι κόσμου χθόνες, ἃς διὰ Νεῖλος / πιμπλάμενος μελάνων τέμνει ἀπ’ Αἰθιοπῶν, The date of this author is up for debate. Some scholars claim an early Ptolemaic date, linking the subject of the poem to the marriage of

cataract explicitly, the border is not the Nile itself (for the river runs through the middle of both Egypt and Nubia) but the location of the Nile where it fills itself up,⁴³ which in the autochthonous mythology is the First Cataract.⁴⁴ In the third case, dating to the early Roman period, the border of Egypt was linked to the worship of Isis and the waters of the Nile in a Greek poem inscribed by a visitor to the temple of Isis at Philae: “We are come to the limits of Egypt, to the fairest islands, / to behold the land of Isis, Inachus’ daughter, and the deep stream of the Nile (Νείλου βαθὺ χεῦμα), which keeps Egypt prosperous year after year for the good fortune of Caesar.”⁴⁵ Here, the “deep stream” likely relates to the tradition of the cataract being

Berenike II and Ptolemy III, see Open de Ruiter (2007); others claim an early Roman date, linking the subject of the poem to the marriage of Cleopatra Selene II (the daughter of Cleopatra VII) and Juba, see Braund (1984).

⁴³ The attribute participle *πιμπλάμενος* in the middle voice, “filling *itself* up,” highlights the self-generative nature of the Nile in the autochthonous inundation mythologies.

⁴⁴ This poem has been translated and interpreted quite differently. For instance, Gow and Page translate: “Great neighboring-regions of the world, which the Nile, swollen from dusky Ethiopia, severs,” envisaging in their translation that the Nile separating Egypt from Libya, though admitting in their discussion that the Nile does no such thing. Paton provides an alternative translation, which I follow in my translation: “Great bordering regions of the world which the full stream of Nile separates from the black Aethiopians...” As Braund (1984) notes, Gow and Page dismiss Paton’s translation because “Crinagoras must have known better than to say that the Nile divided “Egypt and Libya” from “the Ethiopians.” Braund provides evidence of from Pliny’s *Natural History* 5.53 in which he describes the Nile as separating North Africa from Ethiopia. Another piece of evidence that Braund does not mention is that Theocritus uses similar terminology in *Idylls* 17.87, the “encomium to Ptolemy II Philadelphus,” in which he characterizes Ptolemy’s military actions in Egypt as “cutting off” (*ἀποτέμνεται*) part of the black Aethiopians, using the same root word as in this poem (*τέμνει*). From a poetic standpoint, the *τέμνει* standing in the middle of *μελάνων...ἀπ’ Αἰθιοπῶν*, literally cutting off the “black Aethiopians” further suggests the meaning. From a grammatical standpoint, as Braund (1984) notes, the use of *ἀπό* with *τέμνει* is well attested, while the use of *ἀπό* with *πιμπλάμενος* to mean “taking its floodwaters from” is not well attested (177). This evidence provides adequate support to include this text as an example for the Nile flood waters being thought dividing by ethnic identity.

⁴⁵ *FHN* II 170; I. Philae II 158 I ll.1-4 =SB 5.8434. ἤλθομεν, Αἰγύπτοιο πέρας, περικαλλέα νῆσον / Ἴσιδος Ἰναχίδης γαῖαν ἐποψόμενοι /καὶ Νείλου βαθὺ χεῦμα, ὃς Αἰγυπτον πολυόλβον / αἰὲν ἔτος σῶζει Καίσαρος εὐτυχίαις. Another poem inscribed next to this one personifies the island of Philae, which calls out its identity: “I am the beautiful border of Egypt and the far-off

unfathomed, or an abyss, because of its relationship to the underworld as the source of the Nile inundation, as discussed below.⁴⁶ Moreover, the poem demonstrates the relationship between the “deep stream of the Nile,” the prosperity of Egypt, and the sovereign (i.e. Caesar), as well as highlighting the importance of cyclical time in the annual flood, which keeps Egypt prosperous “year after year.”

The fourth example conveys the relationship between the cataract, the border, the inundation, the pharaoh, and the fertility of Egypt from an Egyptian context. In a hieroglyphic inscription and accompanying relief on an exterior wall of the naos of the Ptolemaic temple at Edfu, the Nile inundation god Hapy, whose birthplace is the caverns of the First Cataract and who associates himself with the Cataract goddesses Sothis and Anukis, says to the *ka* of the king: “We [Hapy, Sothis, Anukis] launch for you the flood [from the cataract] which spreads within your borders, and we resume it to make your fields green again.”⁴⁷ Thus, the extent of Egypt was defined by the inundation, which “spreads within your [the king’s] borders,” east to west by the lateral extent of the flood and south to north from the source of the inundation at the First Cataract to the Mediterranean sea. This autochthonous bubbling up of the inundation from within its boundaries provides a national narrative that defined Egypt through its relationship to the Nile and Egyptian sovereignty through the effective maintenance of the inundating border.

limit of the land of the Aithiopians.” ται δὲ Φίλαι φωνεῦντι καλὸν πέρας Αἰγύπτιοιο / ἐμμι καὶ Αἰθιοπῶν γᾶς ὄριον νεάτας. (*FHN* II 169; I. Philae II 142, ll.13-14).

⁴⁶ Herodotus 2.28.

⁴⁷ PM VI 302-305; Valbelle (1981) 67; *Edf.* IV, p. 277 and 278 and pl. 93. This text is not from the cataract region though is clearly linked to the autochthonous inundation mythologies localized to the First Cataract region, which suggests the national extent of their influence. The second half of the inscription— “and we resume it to make your fields green again” —suggests the cyclical nature of the inundation. The cataract deities both launched it and ensured it was resumed again each year.

These examples show the relationship between the cataract, the inundation waters, and the border. They also suggest the importance of the autochthonous inundation ecotheologies in the conception of the First Cataract inundation border, both of which had important implications for effective sovereignty through their relationship in the Egyptian “ecological triangle.”

1.5.2 The Autochthonous Nile Inundations Ecotheologies of the Cataract

As a result of the importance of the Nile inundation for the economic, political, and social well-being of Egypt and its sovereigns, the myths of the Nile inundation were a prominent part of Egyptian religion. This section discusses two prominent autochthonous inundation ecotheologies that flourished in the First Cataract period during the Ptolemaic period: the localized myths of inundation at the First Cataract, which encompasses the Cataract triad, and the national myths of inundation, which relates to the death and resurrection of Osiris.

The term autochthonous is used in part to highlight the indigenous nature of the myths meaning that they are pharaonic and even pre-pharaonic. Additionally, the term autochthonous is used for its literal Greek meaning—*αὐτόχθων* meaning “sprung from the land itself.” The use of the term nods to the ways in which the inundation ecotheologies are tied to the ecological landscape of the First Cataract region.

In the Late Period and the Ptolemaic period, the mythologies were in a process of coalescing in the cataract region, especially those related to the national inundation mythology of Osiris and Isis and the local inundation mythology related to the inundation god Hapy and the Cataract triad of deities—Khnum, Satis, and Anukis. Both mythologies have multiple variations, consistent with the highly adaptable and variant nature of Egyptian mythology and religion. The following summary presents only the most influential autochthonous inundation mythologies, which relate specifically to the First Cataract region, and those most relevant to this project.

1.5.2.1 Elephantine, the Cataract Triad, and Autochthonous Inundation Ecotheologies

The local Cataract triad consisted of the god Khnum and the goddesses Satis and Anukis, all of whom had important roles in the Nile inundation.⁴⁸ In nearly all inscriptions, Khnum is the “master/lord of the cataract”, and Satis is the “mistress of Elephantine.” Anukis is usually the mistress of To-Seti or Sehel.⁴⁹

The ram-headed god Khnum released the Nile by moving his foot, which rested on the two caverns, the purported source of the inundation. As the inundation god, Khnum was said to oversee the release of the Nile inundation, as personified by the god Hapy, who spent the year in the caves (*kr.ty*)⁵⁰ under the cataract waters.⁵¹ Khnum’s role as controlling the floodgate is described in the *Famine Stele*: “Khnum is the deity there, [...] his sandals placed on the flood, holding the door bolt in his hand, opening the (flood)gates as he wishes.”⁵² According to this passage, Khnum resides above the two caverns in which Hapy, the inundation god, sleeps. A gate barricades the flood in the deep, and Khnum controls the gate with his hands and his feet. His sandals act as a gate itself, resting on the flood and controlling its measure.⁵³ His hands hold the door bolt, itself a sacred object.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ For the gods of Elephantine, see Locher (1999) 40-41. Khnum’s role seemed to be somewhat like a stopper, opening and closing the caverns. Satis and Anukis had distinct but complementary roles in the flood. Satis send it out and Anukis brings it back. The roles were related to the (likely false) etymology of their names: Satis from *sti*, which means to shoot (with an arrow) or to pour (water), and Anukis from *ink*, an early form of *snq*, to suckle or breastfeed (*WB* 1, p. 100-101). Valbelle (1981) 140-141.

⁴⁹ cf. Valbelle (1981) #30, 31, 97, 102, 132

⁵⁰ *WB* V, 58. Herodotus places these springs between Syene and Elephantine (Herodotus 2.28).

⁵¹ For a discussion of the Hapy and the Ptolemies, see Recklinghausen (2014).

⁵² Simpson (2003) 388.

⁵³ For an excursus on Khnum’s sandal, see Appendix 1.

⁵⁴ A door bolt was a sacred object, associated with the eye of Horus and the finger of the god Seth (Eaton, 2014, 42). In p.Amun 3, 8; Guglielmi and Buroh, 1997: 120, 147; Eaton, 2014: 53): “The finger of Seth is removed from the eye of Horus. It is well.” Eaton states that the priest was “repairing the moon, associated with Horus’ injured eye, and thereby perpetuating the lunar

Khnum was also an important creation god associated with Ra, Shu, and Tatenen.⁵⁵ In this universal and national role, he models mortals and deities on his potter's wheel.⁵⁶ Thus, in the *Famine Stele*, Khnum states: "For I am the lord of fashioning."⁵⁷ As a creation god, Khnum became an important god throughout Egypt, which grew his cult in Elephantine, eventually taking the most prominent position in the theology of the island.⁵⁸

The goddess Satis protected the southern border with her bow and arrow and was thought to wield the power of bringing forth the Nile flood from the two caverns of the First Cataract. Satis is often portrayed with the white crown of Upper Egypt adorned with antelope horns, her sacred animal, and sometimes she holds a bow and arrow. The earliest cult site on Elephantine focused on Satis, the "mistress of Elephantine." Since the earliest cult site, Satis was associated with the Nile inundation at Elephantine. Her cult site on Elephantine Island had water features which morphed over time from subterranean cave-like grottos representing the entrance of underworld and the source of the inundation to basin-like pools in which large festivals celebrating the onset of the Nile's inundation occurred.

cycle" (Eaton, 2014, 53). This was part of the Daily Ritual and the Ritual of the Royal Ancestors cycle, which ultimately also influenced the solar cycle and the cycle of the inundation. The extraction of the door bolt is a preliminary step to the opening of the doors to the shrine or temple, which symbolizes "the opening of the cosmic "double door," that is, the point at the horizon where heaven and earth meet and through which the sun emerges at dawn" (Lorton, 1999, 138-139) See also Pap. Berlin 3055, III, 8-9 (4); Griffiths (1958) 7.

⁵⁵ Discussed in Chapter 1.2.2 and Chapter 1.3.2.

⁵⁶ See È. Chassinat, *Edfou* IV, p. 146 (2-16 and p. 147 (1-3): "The king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Euergetes, the Son of Re, beneficent king, modeled in turn by Khnum, shaped by the Shaper who makes the tide gush forth in the Beginning of the nomes." (transl. adapted from Zaki (2009) #6. In this Ptolemaic conception, the Khnum's roles of inundation and creator god are melded. In earlier periods (until the Late Period), his roles seemed to have been kept more separate.

⁵⁷ Simpson (2003) 386-391.

⁵⁸ Until the Middle Kingdom, Khnum was worshipped alongside Satis in her temple, along with Anukis and Amun (Kaiser, 1998, 29).

Satis was rarely depicted outside of the First Cataract until the Ptolemaic period and references to her before the Ptolemaic period link her closely with Elephantine and to either the Nile inundation or the border between Egypt and Nubia.⁵⁹ In the Late period and Ptolemaic period, Satis was associated with Sothis (Egyptian *Sopdet*), the star whose heliacal rising coincided with the inundation, called Sirius by the Greeks.⁶⁰ Satis and Sothis were used interchangeably in the temples of the First Cataract in the Greco-Roman period, which became a prominent way that her cult became associated with Isis' cult in the region.⁶²

The goddess Anukis, the daughter (or consort) of Khnum and Satis,⁶³ who was closely related to myth of the Sun's Eye and Nubia, was thought to wield the power to bring back the Nile flood to the First Cataract.⁶⁴ In the family, Anukis often takes on the role of raising and breastfeeding the king (i.e., wet-nurse), whom Satis has birthed, which gives her a similar role to Nephthys the sister of Isis and Osiris, as well as his sometime lover. Her nutritive role to the king

⁵⁹ For instance, in the Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom, Satis purifies the deceased pharaoh's body with four jars of water from Elephantine; Budge (1969) 56; Wilkinson (2017) 165; Pinch (2002) 187. In the Book of the Dead, the scribe Ani says: "I have passed through the river-flood...I have been in Elephantine in the House of Satis." (Budge, 1895, 271). In the Coffin Text, "those who shall come against you from the South shall be driven off by Satis, Lady of Elephantine, who will shoot at them with her arrows, which are painful and sharp [against (?)] them. (Faulkner, 1972, 92).

⁶⁰ Discussed in Chapter 1.3.1. Satis' crown was sometimes adorned with the five-pointed star typically present on the head of Sothis (EA11143; Wells (1985) 258-9; see also EA60110 = PM viii, p. 1103). Satis' temple at Elephantine may have had a Sothic alignment (Wells, 1985, 255; cf. Shaltout and Belmonte, 2005, 288; Conman, 2003, 41).

⁶¹ Wells (1985) 255. *contra* Wells: Shaltout and Belmonte (2005) 288; Conman (2003) 41.

⁶² See Chapter 1.3.1.

⁶³ The Cataract triad was unusual in Egyptian theology, since it featured one male member and two female members (for other examples of male-female-female triadic structure, see te Velde (1971) 84). For the debate over Anukis' role in the triad, see Habachi (1950), who argues for Anukis being the daughter (vs. consort) of Khnum and Satis. See also te Velde (1971) 85, who makes an interesting point that according to elite gender roles, it is not necessary to distinguish the roles of daughter and consort, since Egyptian princesses could, on the rare occasion, hold both (85-86).

⁶⁴ See Valbelle (1981).

is paralleled in the role she has in the inundation, which is to bring back the flood to reveal the fertile land underneath.⁶⁵

1.5.2.2 Philae, the Philean Triad, and the Autochthonous Inundation Ecotheology

The place of the autochthonous inundation and the border of Egypt, which had previously been at the northern end of the First Cataract was extended, starting in the Late period.⁶⁶

Following the blueprint of their native Egyptian predecessor Nectanebo II, the Ptolemaic sovereigns developed a prominent cult site dedicated to Isis and her familial triad (Isis, Osiris, Horus) at Philae, an island on the south side of the First Cataract.

At Philae, Isis' cult was centered around her universal character as queen of the gods as well as mistress of heaven, earth, and the underworld; her maternal character as mother of Horus; her funerary role in protecting and revivifying her brother-husband Osiris; and ultimately her role in securing kingship for the Ptolemaic dynasty. The main ritual of the temple featured the Isis statue being carried out from her sanctuary on her barque and sailing over the dangerous cataract waters to the resting place of her murdered brother-husband Osiris on neighboring Biggeh island. On the island, called the Abaton in Greek, Osiris rested in an underground cave topped with a sacred mound, wherein his mummified form released its efflux, believed to be the substance of the Nile inundation. Isis' role was to protect the dead body of Osiris and to give the proper libations, offerings, and invocations to revivify her spouse. In this process of revivification, she conceived their son, Horus. While this was one of the most important and

⁶⁵ E.g., É. Chassinat, *Edf. I/2*, 317 (14-18), 318 (1-5). "Long live the excellent king that Sothis [i.e., Satis] begotten, raised on the knees of Anukis." Later in the same inscription, Anukis says: "I embrace the flood to make the fertile lands flourish when it renews its coming at the beginning of the year." (Translation adapted from Zaki, 2009, Cat. #2.).

⁶⁶ See discussion in Introduction 2.4.

widespread myths throughout ancient Egypt, it is not until the Late Period that it came to be associated in its full form with the First Cataract.⁶⁷

Like Satis, Isis was linked to Sothis (Egyptian Sopdet). This developed because of the close relationship between Osiris and the constellation Orion (Sah in Egyptian), which is followed in the sky by the star Sothis (Sirius). Isis-Sothis was in a protective role of her husband-brother Osiris-Orion. Since the heliacal rising of the Sothis star typically preceded the annual Nile inundation, Isis' association with Sothis because of her relationship with Osiris was extended to a relationship with the inundation. Although, until the Late period, Sothis was more prominent in this role than Isis.⁶⁸

In general, the home of the Cataract triad is considered to be in Elephantine and the surrounding area, and the home of the Philean triad was considered to be in Philae and the surrounding area. In the Late period and Ptolemaic period, however, there was an ongoing process of syncretism, adoption, and adaptation of the two triads. During the Ptolemaic period, both sources of the Nile – Biggeh and Elephantine – were recognized concurrently and the Ptolemies commissioned Isis temples near both. The earliest was commissioned by Ptolemy II at Philae, where, in one relief, the king is shown offering Isis pure cataract water, “which comes

⁶⁷ Herodotus 2.42.1: “For no gods are worshipped in common by the whole of Egypt save only Isis and Osiris, whom they say to be Dionysus; these are worshipped by all alike.” Osiris, however, did have an earlier presence in the region, especially associated with the Cataract Triad (Khnum, Satis, and Anukis). For instance, a Middle Kingdom graffito on the road from Aswan to Philae, records an offering to Osiris, master of Busiris, the great god, master of Abydos; to Satis, mistress of Elephantine; to Khnum, master of the Cataract; and to Anukis, mistress of Sehel.” (dM 2.1.1 = P 98; Year 24 of Amenemhat III; Valbelle (1981) 5). A New Kingdom graffito on Sehel island (two kilometers south of Elephantine) mentions Khnum, Satis, Anukis, Osiris, residing on Sehel Island (Sehel M 48 = dM 132 = W 199 Ramses VI; Valbelle (1981) 21). Isis does not appear in the extant sources in the region known to this author.

⁶⁸ The roles and identity of Isis-Sothis-Satis are discussed in Chapter 1.3.2.

forth from Biggeh, and which gives life forever.”⁶⁹ A generation later, Ptolemy III commissioned an Isis temple at Aswan, where he is shown offering “a water libation to his mother [Isis], provoking high water, coming out from Elephantine, the sweet cataract flowing from the Two Caverns.”⁷⁰ The two sources of the Nile could even be recognized in the same frieze or inscription.⁷¹

1.5.3 The Environs

In Pharaonic times, the border was at Syene/Elephantine, meaning that the area to the south (including Philae Island) was part of Nubian territory. Likely built in the Middle Kingdom, the defensive wall running parallel to the Nile protected the cataract itself and was practically impregnable.⁷² With the extension of the border south to Philae, however, the defensive wall became less strategically important. The temple of Philae became the major strategic point in the region with the practical function of blocking ships traveling from the South.⁷³

As in present day, this region was ethnically mixed. Strabo states that Philae was a “common settlement, like Elephantine, of Ethiopians and Egyptians.”⁷⁴ This was further complicated by Greeks settled in the region as part of the political and military administration of

⁶⁹ Žabkar (1988) 51: Hymn IV.

⁷⁰ Bresciani and Pernigotti (1978) 61: B.12.

⁷¹ For instance, at Edfu, Ptolemy VIII makes an offering to Khnum and Sothis (local Cataract deities closely associated with Isis). As a result of his offering, Sothis, who is called both mistress of Aswan and princess of Biggeh, says to the king, “I cause the great flood of the flood from the two caves to come out for you.” Valbelle (1981) 62; *Edf.* VI, p. 288, pl. 160.

⁷² Dietze (1994) 66.

⁷³ Dietze (1994) 65.

⁷⁴ Strabo 17.49. Although the ethnic situation was more complex in this region than merely Egyptian and Nubian, there is currently limited understanding of the ethnicities and tribal identities of Lower Nubia (Ashby, 2016, 12). For my purposes, I mean Nubian as an ethno-geographic term and not an ethno-cultural term. Given the nature of this dissertation, much of the Nubian interaction encompasses elite material. Therefore, much of my discussion of Nubian is political. For more on Nubian ethnicity see Smith (1991), Smith (2003), Edwards (2004), Dann (2009), Török (2008).

Upper Egypt, which is clearly identified in the number of Greek inscriptions at Philae. The confluence of ethnic identities of the population is reflected in the religious culture, both in the votives of the individuals worshipping at the temples and of the temples and the characteristics of their gods and goddesses. For instance, Khnum, the Egyptian creator god was worshipped at Elephantine as the protector of the First Cataract and as the “Lord of Nubia” throughout Nubia.⁷⁵ Furthermore, a temple of the Nubian god Arensnuphis was built at the southern end of the eastern portico on Philae during the reign of Ptolemy IV.

To the south of the First Cataract was the Dodekaschoinos borderlands of Lower Nubia. The Dodekaschoinos region is so named after a claim by Herodotus that the region directly south of Elephantine was winding “like the Maeander” for a length of twelve *schoinoi*, ending at an island in the Nile, called Tachompsu.⁷⁶ In the ancient sources, this region is somewhat vague and has been the object of much scholarly debate.⁷⁷ Following the discovery of a hieroglyphic inscription in the Roman temple of Maharraqah, approximately 150 km south of Philae, which relates worship of “Isis, Mistress of Philae, residing in Takompsu,” a consensus about the distance of Dodekaschoinos was reached, which agreed that the Dodekaschoinos region reached from Elephantine to Maharraqah.⁷⁸

The First Cataract and Dodekaschoinos region of Lower Nubia has a long history of settlement and contestation between Egypt and Nubia. The history of this region from prehistory to the advent of Christianity has been comprehensively discussed by Török.⁷⁹ The history, epigraphy, and architecture of Philae and the Dodekaschoinos in the Ptolemaic period has been

⁷⁵ cf. *Famine Stele* (transl. ed. Simpson, 2003, 386-391).

⁷⁶ Herodotus 2.29.

⁷⁷ Dietze (1994) 98-102.

⁷⁸ Dietze (1994) 101-102.

⁷⁹ Török (1980) and especially (2008). Ch. 14 discussed the Ptolemaic and Nubian relationship.

discussed by Dietze.⁸⁰ The topography and history of the region in the Greco-Roman period is dealt with by Locher.⁸¹ The relationship between Meroë and Egypt has been overviewed by Kuckertz.⁸² The scholarship of Burstein is also valuable in understanding the region and the relationship between the Ptolemaic empire and Nubia.⁸³ The corpus of documents relating to the region and Nubia more generally can be found in the second and third volumes of *Fontes Historiae Nubiorum* (*FHN*), which include texts from Egyptian hieroglyphics, hieratic, and Demotic, as well as in Meroitic, Greek, and Latin.⁸⁴

1.6 Brief Overview of Other Ptolemaic Temples and Settlement Sites in the First Cataract

The Ptolemaic dynasty had a strong presence in the First Cataract and the Dodekaschoinos, which can be seen in the large-scale building projects in the First Cataract region, the addition of an administrative and military organization, royal visits, and the large number of Greek inscriptions.⁸⁵ Under Ptolemaic rule, there was a revival of building in the First Cataract and Dodekaschoinos region, including both reconstruction and redecoration of pharaonic sites and construction of new sites. This building was not always consistent as it was often interrupted by military invasions and political motivations. Ptolemaic building in the First Cataract centered mainly around Philae Island, Elephantine Island, Syene, Sehel Island,⁸⁶ and

⁸⁰ Dietze (1994).

⁸¹ Locher (2017).

⁸² Kuckertz (2021).

⁸³ See Burstein (1989), (1993), (1995), (1998), (2000), (2008), (2014) et al.

⁸⁴ *FHN* II and III.

⁸⁵ Dietze (1994) 63.

⁸⁶ This island is approximately two kilometers southwest of Elephantine. It originally had a sanctuary dedicated to the goddess Satis, which was later rededicated to Anukis. In the Ptolemaic period, Sehel Island became a place of worship of the Elephantine triad (Khnum, Satis, and Anukis) as well as Osiris, under the name of “The God in the West.” One of the most important texts associated with the temple of Khnum is the Famine Stele, which was found on the island of Sehel.

Biggeh Island.⁸⁷ Ptolemaic building projects in the Dodekaschoinos south of the First Cataract are centered around three sites: Dabod,⁸⁸ Kalabsha, and Dakka. This section introduces the three most important places and their temples for this study: Philae, Elephantine Island, and Syene.

1.6.1 Philae

At the heart of the Ptolemaic interest in the region was the island of Philae⁸⁹ and its Temple of Isis. Philae Island is located approximately seven kilometers south of modern-day Aswan (ancient Syene). The island is small compared to the large size of Elephantine, measuring only 385-meters by 176-meters prior to inundation. It was the focal point of building and a central cultic site in the region during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods.⁹⁰ Considered a unit with the Abaton on Biggeh Island, the two were the cultic center for the worship of Isis and Osiris in Upper Egypt and Nubia.

During the Pharaonic period, small shrines were dedicated on the island. The date of the earliest building on the island is up for debate, since it seems likely that the earliest objects found on the island were brought from elsewhere and reused for later structures.⁹¹ Most scholars

⁸⁷ The island of Biggeh was the home of the Abaton, the sacred burial site of Osiris, which was only accessible to priests. Both Isis and Thoth had epithets related to Biggeh and the Abaton. There was also a temple to Hathor. Biggeh, unlike neighboring Philae, had a pharaonic history going back to the Middle Kingdom.

⁸⁸ Also spelled Debod. The temple was deconstructed and rebuilt in Madrid, Spain.

⁸⁹ See Locher (1999) 121-158. The name of the island in Egyptian was *p3-*iw-rk**, which is of unknown origin, though is thought to be possibly of Nubian origin. The name Philae in Greek is a Greek version of the Egyptian but was explained by classical authors as “(fem.) friends” or “friendship;” Dijkstra (2008) 142; Rutherford (1998) 233; Kockelmann (2012) 1.

⁹⁰ References to Philae can be found in a number of classical authors: Diodorus Siculus 1.22 and 27; Strabo 17.49; Seneca, *Natural History* 4a.2.7; Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris* 20; Ptolemy 4.5.74; Pliny the Elder 5.9.5.10.

⁹¹ The earliest architectural objects on the island are a group of Ramesside blocks, which were uncovered in the 1970s during a cleaning project, though they have indications of reuse. Giammarusti and Roccati (1980) 55, n.4; Farag et al. (1979); Haeny (1985) 200-201; Wahbah (1978) 181-183; Dietze (1994) 68). 300 blocks from the temple of Amasis II of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty were reused in the Temple of Isis; Farag et al. (1976); Farid (1980); Dietze (1994) 69.

believe the oldest structures on the island were from the Saite period.⁹² The oldest temple dedicated to Isis on the island was likely a small kiosk built by Psamtik II of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, possibly related to his Nubian campaigns in 592 BCE.⁹³ The oldest extant building on Philae is an Isis shrine built by Nectanebo I, including a kiosk and a gateway, both of which were incorporated into later buildings.⁹⁴

The Ptolemies, especially Ptolemy II Philadelphus, Ptolemy V Epiphanes, and Ptolemy VI Philometor, built extensively on Philae, with other Ptolemaic kings leaving their mark on the island with decorations and inscriptions. Nearly two-thirds of the surviving temple buildings on Philae are Ptolemaic, with most of the remaining structures dating from the time of Augustus and Nero.⁹⁵ The main structure on the island was the Great Temple of Isis, which was in the center of the island. This temple was built in the early Ptolemaic period and decorated extensively by Ptolemy II Philadelphus, during whose reign the naos behind the second pylon and the pillared hall of the temple were constructed.⁹⁶ The structures are now located on Agilkia Island after the flooding of the region during the construction of the Aswan High Dam in the 1960s.

Isis was not the only deity worshipped on the island. Hathor was also an important deity on the island and had a temple dedicated to her, which was decorated under Ptolemy VI, Ptolemy

⁹¹ Wahbah (1978) 181; Dietze (1994) 68; Arnold (1999) 199.

⁹² Scholars debate whether Taharqo, the Nubian pharaoh of Egypt of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, built a shrine to Amun on the island. For more on Taharqo, see Rutherford (1998). Haeny (1985) suggests that the blocks from Taharqo were merely reused from temples elsewhere. However, there are eighteen blocks from this period, which suggests they came from a building on the island; see Kockelmann (2012) 6. For the early shrine to Amun (not Isis), see Arnold (1999) 43; Dietze (1994) 68; Giammarusti and Roccati (1980) 57; Winter (1982) 1025.

⁹³ Kockelmann (2012) 7; Haeny (1985) 202; Hölbl (2004) 41; Kadry (1980) 293-299.

⁹⁴ Wahbah (1978) 181; Dietze (1994) 68.

⁹⁵ Kockelmann (2012) 3.

⁹⁶ The *mammisi* (birth house) was also likely constructed during the reign of Ptolemy II; Dietze (1994) 69.

VIII, and Augustus. At Philae, Hathor's cult also had an important connection to Nubia in her role as the Eye of Ra.⁹⁷ There was also a temple of Imhotep, a deified non-royal Egyptian. A chapel of Mandulis, the Nubian (or possibly Blemmyan) god, was erected near the Isis temple on Philae in 186 BCE.⁹⁸ Mandulis was worshipped as the son of Isis and Osiris, a sort of Nubian Horus. Furthermore, the Nubian deity Arensnuphis had a cult association and temple on the island.⁹⁹

When the region was captured by Meroitic kings Ergamenes II (Arqamani, 218—200 BCE) and Adikhalamani (ca. 200—190 BCE) during the Great Revolt (205—186 BCE),¹⁰⁰ the Nubian rulers left their mark on Philae. Ergamenes II decorated the older buildings, such as the birth house and temple of Arensnuphis.¹⁰¹ While he seemed to particularly favor the cult of Isis, there have been no traces of construction or decoration from the Nubian kings on the Temple of Isis.¹⁰² When the Ptolemies took back control of the region, Ergamenes II's cartouches were erased and replaced with the names of Ptolemy IV by Ptolemy V.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ This is discussed at length in Chapter 3. See Kockelmann (2012) 4.

⁹⁸ Kockelmann (2012) 4; Locher (1999) 137; Haeny (1985) 222. The cult is likely mentioned in a Greek inscription from the mid-2nd c. BCE (SB VIII 9737).

⁹⁹ Locher (1999) 138; Chauveau (1995) 254, no. 130. The temple dates to at least the time of Ptolemy IV and was enlarged or decorated by Ergamenes II, Ptolemy V, Ptolemy VI or VIII, and Tiberius. The timing of the commencement of this temple is also consistent with building of the temple of Arensnuphis at Dakka, 120 kilometers to the south, which was also begun by Ptolemy IV. See Kockelmann (2012) 3; Arnold (1999) 178, 190; Winter (1981) 510; Haeny (1985) 220-221; Winter (1982) 1022; Dietze (1994) 70; Winter (1973).

¹⁰⁰ McGing (1997); Véisse (2004); Clarysse (2004); Manning and Ludlow (2016) et al.

¹⁰¹ Arnold (1999) 193.

¹⁰² Arnold (1999) 193; Dietze (1994) 71.

¹⁰³ Arnold (1999) 193; Dietze (1994) 71.

Philae attracted pilgrims and visitors, including worshippers from Egypt, Nubia, Greece, Crete, Asia Minor, and Rome,¹⁰⁴ administrative officials,¹⁰⁵ and even the Ptolemaic royal family.¹⁰⁶ There are hundreds of votive inscriptions, mainly *proskynemata* (devotional addresses to a god), and other inscriptions left on the temple, a practice which started at the end of the 2nd c. BCE and continued throughout the Roman period.¹⁰⁷

1.6.1.1 Philae Literature Review

While popular accounts are numerous (Philae, along with the entire First Cataract region, remains a popular tourist destination),¹⁰⁸ a major lacuna in scholarship is a general scholarly monograph on Philae.¹⁰⁹ The best introduction to Philae, with a literature review, extensive bibliography, a basic outline of the history of the island and its temples, an archaeological map, and color photographs, is by Kockelmann.¹¹⁰ Arnold gives a basic introduction to the site.¹¹¹ Although the focus is on Roman Philae, Hölbl details a survey of the history and archaeology of the site.¹¹² Similarly, Winter provides an overview of the site and its monuments.¹¹³

¹⁰⁴ Dijkstra (2008) 186; Hölbl (2004) 51-53. The earliest Latin inscription in Egypt is found at Philae (Beness and Hillard, 2003).

¹⁰⁵ In the 3rd and 2nd c. BCE, these officials are recorded in dedicatory inscriptions. Tension about the official administrative visits (and the cost of them) came to head during the reign of Ptolemy VIII. A petition letter for respite from these visits (and the royal response) was recorded on an obelisk placed in front of the Great Temple of Isis, highly visible to all visitors, *Phil. I* 19; Griffith (1912) 10; Müller (1920); Recklinghausen (2018).

¹⁰⁶ Bingen (1997) 93-94; Hölbl (1994) 143; Rutherford (1998) 236.

¹⁰⁷ Cruz-Urbe (2002) 176-177; Rutherford (1998) 230; Griffith (1935-1937); Bernand and Bernand (1969); Ashby (2020).

¹⁰⁸ Popular accounts: Sauneron and Stierlin (1975); Giammarusti and Roccati (1980).

¹⁰⁹ This brief literature review of Philae is lightly adapted from Kockelmann (2012) 9.

¹¹⁰ Kockelmann (2012).

¹¹¹ Arnold (1992) and (1999).

¹¹² Hölbl (2004).

¹¹³ Winter (1982).

The archaeology of the site is summarized in Haeny, which includes important illustrations for the development of the site in its historical development.¹¹⁴ Although over a century old, Lyon's *Reports* on Philae are still valuable. The architectural plans of many buildings on Philae can be downloaded from the Ancient Egyptian Architecture Online (AEGARON) project.¹¹⁵

The publication record of the inscriptions and reliefs are somewhat more difficult. The graffiti was published by Bernand and Bernand, Griffith, and Cruz-Uribe.¹¹⁶ The decorations of the naos were published by Bénéдите, though there a number of inaccuracies.¹¹⁷ In the late 1950s, Herman Junker published the "Philä"-series on behalf of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, which included modern editions of the inscriptions, including scenes from Philae and their translations.¹¹⁸ This project has been continued by Erich Winter and Holger Kockelmann. Winter overviews many of the published single texts until 1974.¹¹⁹ The hymns to Isis at Philae, including editions, translations, and commentaries are published by Žabkar with updates by Klotz.¹²⁰ The Philae inscriptions related to the *Myth of the Sun's Eyes* are collected and discussed in Inconnu-Bocquillon.¹²¹ The iconography of the temple reliefs has been analyzed by Vassilika.¹²² A reconstruction and coloration of the temple reliefs of Philae can be found in Beinlich and Fuchs.¹²³ The *mammisi* of Philae was published by Junker and White, and the texts

¹¹⁴ Haeny (1985).

¹¹⁵ There are 50 architectural plans available on the site at the time of writing.

<http://drupaldev.aegaron.ucla.edu/browse/plans#>

¹¹⁶ Bernand and Bernand (1969), Griffith (1935-1937), and Cruz-Uribe (2016).

¹¹⁷ Bénéдите (1893-1985).

¹¹⁸ cf. Junker (1958) and Junker et al. (1965).

¹¹⁹ Winter (1974).

¹²⁰ Žabkar (1981), (1988), and (1992); Klotz (2014-2015).

¹²¹ Inconnu-Bocquillon (2001).

¹²² Vassilika (1989).

¹²³ Beinlich and Fuchs (2009).

of the *mammisi* from the time of Ptolemy VIII were published by Goedicke.¹²⁴ The geographic processions of the *soubassement* of the temple of Isis was published by Leitz.¹²⁵ The decorations of the pylons were analyzed by Martzloff.¹²⁶

1.6.2 Elephantine Island

Elephantine Island¹²⁷ is a c. 1600-meter by 450-meter island of about forty-six hectares situated at the north of the First Cataract, neighboring Syene (modern day Aswan).¹²⁸

Elephantine Island was an important religious, economic, and political site since prehistory, especially for the worship of the inundation and the Cataract triad—Khnum, Satis, and Anukis. In Pharaonic times, it served as the border and fortress protecting and delineating the boundary between Egypt and Nubia. The island was an important stone quarry site of granite for building projects throughout Egypt. There was also a granite step pyramid built on the island during the Third Dynasty. Two of the most famous structures on the island were the Nilometers, which measured the Nile's water level during the annual flood.

Elephantine was an important part of long-distance trade between Nubia and Egypt.¹²⁹ Its role as a trade center grew in the 18th Dynasty, because of Egyptian expansion into Nubia. At this time, large building projects expanded the millennia old temples. Around the same time, the island's fortifications were expanded.¹³⁰ While the changes and growth on the island are documented in the archaeological record, very few textual attestations survive for the island in

¹²⁴ Junker and White (1965); Goedicke (1982).

¹²⁵ Leitz (2012).

¹²⁶ Martzloff (2011).

¹²⁷ See Locher (1999) 15-57.

¹²⁸ Müller (2016) 214. Both Elephantine and Syene lie close to the Tropic of Cancer, which made them fertile grounds for scientific discovery, especially Eratosthenes' discovery of the Earth's circumference (Strabo 17.1.148).

¹²⁹ Müller (2016) 214.

¹³⁰ Müller (2016) 216.

this period.¹³¹ Over the centuries, as Egypt lost control over Nubia, Elephantine reverted to its role as a border fortress.

In the second half of the first millennium BCE, there are documentary texts in Demotic, Aramaic, Greek, Hieratic, and Hieroglyphs that fill in the archaeological evidence on the island. The Kushite rulers of the 25th Dynasty are attested on the island by inscriptions on stelae. After the Persian conquest of the region in 526 BCE, a Persian garrison, consisting in part of Jewish/Aramaic soldiers, was stationed on the island.¹³² These soldiers founded a Jewish temple on the island, which was destroyed in 410 BCE by the priests of the Khnum temple but was rebuilt again later. There has been found a large cache of Aramaic papyri on the island, the so-called Elephantine papyri.¹³³ The fate of the island and its temples during the Persian conquest is debated.¹³⁴ Recently, scholars have argued that the temple was likely desecrated (following Herodotus' account), but that desecration likely did not mean the destruction of the buildings and might not be found in the archaeological record.¹³⁵

The island was considered the home of Khnum, the god of the Nile inundation and guardian of the First Cataract. He was worshipped along with his consort Satis, the war goddess protecting the region and the bountiful annual flood, and their daughter (also called Satis' sister) Anukis, who also had a role in the flood. Khnum, who was identified as a potter, was a creator deity who fashioned humans, gods, and the world itself from the silt of the Nile.

¹³¹ Müller (2016) 217.

¹³² Müller (2016) 219; Rohrmoser (2014), 240-290.

¹³³ See Porten (1996).

¹³⁴ Müller (2016) 234-235.

¹³⁵ Müller (2016) 235. Depuydt (1994) 119-126; Jansen-Winkel (2002), 317.

Elephantine was home to a number of temples, both to deities and important individuals.¹³⁶ The earliest temple on the island was a Temple of Satis founded c. 3200 BCE. This temple was constructed and rebuilt during the entire pharaonic period. In the New Kingdom, the temple was completely rebuilt by Hatshepsut (1507—1458 BCE) and enlarged by her successor Thutmose III (1479—1425 BCE). During the Ptolemaic period, a completely new temple was built by Ptolemy VI (180—145 BCE), which was the first time the temple was not built over the place of the Old Kingdom temple. It was finished by his brother Ptolemy VIII (182—116 BCE) with an addition of a pronaos.¹³⁷

A temple of Khnum is recorded as early as the Third Dynasty, although no archaeological evidence dates earlier than the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE.¹³⁸ While the Satis temple was founded earlier than the Khnum temple, the Khnum temple eventually became the principal sanctuary on the island.¹³⁹ The temple was rebuilt and expanded in the Thirtieth Dynasty by Nectanebo II, directly before the Ptolemaic period.¹⁴⁰ It was completely rebuilt by the Ptolemies and expanded into the territory of the Temple of Satis with a cemetery of the sacred rams of the god Khnum.¹⁴¹

1.6.2.1 Elephantine Literature Review

The German Archaeological Institute Cairo (DAIK) in cooperation with the Swiss Institute for Egyptian Building Archaeology (Swiss Institute) has led investigations of the town

¹³⁶ For instance, there were temples to a Sixth Dynasty nomarch Heqaib and the pharaohs Thutmose III and Amenhotep II.

¹³⁷ For a more in-depth explanation for Satis' temple on Elephantine and its inundation qualities, see Appendix 2.

¹³⁸ Müller (2016) 226.

¹³⁹ Müller (2016) 226.

¹⁴⁰ Niederberger (1999); Jenni (1998).

¹⁴¹ Müller (2016) 220.

and temples of Elephantine since 1969. The annual and biannual excavations reports published in *MDAIK* and the monographs resulting from the excavations are invaluable for studying the region. This project relied on the DAIK monographs by Laskowska-Kusztal (1998); Jenni (1998); Niederberger (1999); Ubertini (2005); and Jaritz, Laskowska-Kusztal, and Niederberger (2019); the official DAIK guidebook of Elephantine by Kaiser and translated into English by Eaton-Krauss (1998); and the cross-disciplinary collected volume by Raue, Seidlmayer, and Speiser (2013).¹⁴² Von Pilgrim discusses the stratigraphy of the temple archaeology from the New Kingdom to the Ptolemaic period.¹⁴³ Dreyer and Wells expand on the Temple of Satis on Elephantine.¹⁴⁴ Piejko discusses late Ptolemaic activities at the Temple of Khnum on Elephantine.¹⁴⁵ Porten provides a selection of important Elephantine papyri in English.¹⁴⁶ Müller discusses the priests of Elephantine island from the Egyptian perspective.¹⁴⁷ Brief overviews of the history of the island and its excavations are provided by Dreyer et al. and Höveler-Müller et al.¹⁴⁸

1.6.3 Syene / Aswan

Syene¹⁴⁹ is the ancient Greek name for the modern city of Aswan, which was called *swnw* in ancient Egyptian. The city is situated on a peninsula on the East Bank of the Nile, immediately North of the First Cataract and facing the island of Elephantine. Syene was the main border town

¹⁴² Laskowska-Kusztal (1996); Jenni (1998); Niederberger (1999); Ubertini (2005); and Jaritz, Laskowska-Kusztal, and Niederberger (2019); Kaiser (1998); Raue, Seidlmayer, and Speiser (2013).

¹⁴³ von Pilgrim (2001).

¹⁴⁴ Wells (1985); Dreyer (1986).

¹⁴⁵ Piejko (1992).

¹⁴⁶ Porten (1996).

¹⁴⁷ Müller (2016).

¹⁴⁸ Dreyer (2007); Höveler-Müller (2011).

¹⁴⁹ See Locher (1999) 58-89.

for the southern border between Egypt and Nubia and was thought of as the “opening” of the Nile. From Syene, it is possible to navigate down the Nile unimpeded until Alexandria. Important features of the region are the stone quarries, which were known especially for granite used in many monumental building projects throughout Egypt. Quarries were on both sides of the Nile from Syene to Philae. The town held a garrison throughout its history and functioned as a market town and financial center in the Ptolemaic period.

Syene is mentioned by many ancient authors including Herodotus, Strabo, Pliny the Elder, and Ptolemy. It was also mentioned in the Book of Ezekiel and the Book of Isaiah. Under Ptolemy III, a temple of Isis was begun at Syene, which was continued by Ptolemy IV.¹⁵⁰ In 196/5, during the Great Southern Secession, Nubians occupied the city and remained there until 187.¹⁵¹ This is recorded in a demotic graffito in the temple of Isis at Aswan.¹⁵²

Syene has been excavated by the Swiss Institute along with the Supreme Council of Antiquities Aswan since 2000, with previous Swiss Institute excavations and documentation since the early 1970s. An overview of the site and excavations is published on the Swiss Institute website.¹⁵³ Important monographs for the study of Syene, especially the Temple of Isis at Syene are Bresciani and Pernigotti’s study of the temple of Isis and Dijkstra and Cruz-Uribe’s study of the figural and textual graffiti of the temple of Isis.¹⁵⁴

2. Methodology and Theoretical Orientation

This dissertation sits at the intersections of multiple academic fields, theoretical orientations, and methodologies. It is framed by a collection of questions: What is a border? How

¹⁵⁰ Discussed at length in Chapter 2. Hölbl (2001) 87; Bresciani and Pernigotti (1978).

¹⁵¹ Hölbl (2001) 156; Bresciani and Pernigotti (1978).

¹⁵² Hölbl (2001) 156; Bresciani and Pernigotti (1978).

¹⁵³ https://swissinst.ch/html/forschung_neu.html

¹⁵⁴ Bresciani and Pernigotti (1978); Dijkstra and Cruz-Uribe (2012).

are borders constructed ideologically? What roles do borders play in political ideology and imperial identity? How is gender used to construct the ideology of a border? How does a culture's view of nature influence the gendered ideologies of the border? How do these enduring questions manifest in the specific political, cultural, and religious *milieux* of Ptolemaic Egypt, especially in the First Cataract region? Except for the last question, these questions are being asked and researched in various fields, including border studies, gender studies, political science, history, anthropology, literature, and philosophy. Each chapter of this dissertation asks these questions in part from the perspective of one or more of these fields.

The dissertation draws on a diverse range of primary source material to re/de/construct the multiplicity of borders accumulated in the physical and imaginary space between Egypt and Nubia. By centering the intersections of gender and nature, the limited corpus of materials for studying the Nubian-Egyptian border in the Ptolemaic period has counterintuitively expanded, revealing a flood of materials imbued with border ideology, such as prominent mythologies and ecotheologies preserved in a vast number of Egyptian temple decorations and inscriptions in the First Cataract. Moreover, it incorporates sources for the border from many genres and cultural backgrounds that are often neglected such as the temple texts and iconography in the often-overlooked Temple of Isis at Aswan, the non-canonical Greek *Alexander Romance*, and the under-published texts and iconography from the Temple of Isis at Philae.

In general, this methodological shift has resulted in Egyptian evidence standing at the forefront of much of the dissertation, which has revealed for instance the importance of Egyptian theologies and pharaonic conceptions of borders in the Ptolemaic period. This is crucial for understanding the border holistically. Moreover, the focus on religious and literary materials has shown that conceptions of borders, both those long held since pharaonic times and those

developed and transformed under the Ptolemies, were deeply ingrained in the cultural, social, and religious imaginaries of Egypt. Moreover, this interdisciplinary, eclectic approach to the Egyptian-Nubian border reveals unrecognized ways in which the Ptolemaic sovereigns embedded their sovereignty, their empire, and their own identity in the religious and natural landscape of Egypt.

The use of different orientations and an eclectic assortment of evidence models the complexity of the ideology of the border in a multicultural setting. The First Cataract border is both real and imaginary; it exists in both Egypt and Nubia; it is embedded in the landscape and also manipulable; it is ancient and renewable; and it is at once religious, political, economic, cultural, geographic, and ecological. One goal of the dissertation is to appreciate this complexity as well as to forefront approaches and evidence that are typically absent from the discussion of the First Cataract border in the Ptolemaic period, which tends to feature the administrative, military, and architectural nature of the borderlands. When considering the choice of topics and evidence, the goal was to balance approaches and types of evidence within the constraints of the publication record and accessibility during a global pandemic.

The dissertation has a set of theoretical orientations, both influences and critiques, which have influenced each of the four chapters, including post-structuralism, deconstruction, ecofeminism, and border theory. In the following sections, each theoretical orientation is presented and its utility in the dissertation is discussed.

2.1 Post-Structuralism

The dissertation conceptualizes the construction of the border as well as the postmodern constructions of gender and the environment at the border as encompassing dualities—the binary

and its transcendence/transformation.¹⁵⁵ The southern border of Egypt at the First Cataract of the Nile is marked by a proliferation of pairs—two caverns, two sets of triads of deities, two major temple sites. The ecotheologies of the First Cataract border are structured as binary pairs, such as the juxtaposition of water/land, infinity/bounded time, dark/light, male/female, etc.¹⁵⁶ As binary pairs, they stand in opposition as well as in unity, coupled or yoked together in their binary association. Borders are similarly dividing and yoking together the bordered states. Binary conceptions of gender can also be yoked, externally through sexual union or internally in gender fluidity.¹⁵⁷ As a liminal site of creation, the First Cataract border was a place that encompassed and yoked these omnipresent binary pairs, seemingly erasing both difference and hierarchy.

With its proliferation of intersecting dualisms, the First Cataract border is conceptually interesting as a site of post-structuralist analysis, especially in the realms of ecofeminist theory and border theory. At its heart, post-structuralism critiques and/or extends structuralism, which contends that cultures, like myths, are constructed through a system of underlying structures, which are organized through binary oppositions.¹⁵⁸ In post-structuralist analysis, the first order of

¹⁵⁵ Recognizing that it is not the most fashionable term, the term dualities is used to honor the dual nature of the border and the proliferation of pairs at the border.

¹⁵⁶ This is not unique to the ecotheologies of the First Cataract and is prevalent in many cultures and religions.

¹⁵⁷ The definition of gender fluid is itself fluid. One holistic definition is “experience of one’s own gender as neither man nor woman, both man and woman, or acknowledging change over the life course between and beyond these options, including such categories as nonbinary, agender, and genderqueer” (Sumerau et al., 2019, 206). See also Monro (2019) for the similar term ‘genderqueer.’

¹⁵⁸ See especially, Lévi-Strauss (1966). Structuralism has had a significant influence on the analysis of mythology, including Egyptian mythology. cf. Troy (1986) has had significant influence on the field of queenship and goddesses in Egyptian mythology, which is based on binary oppositions in the “patterns” of queenship.

business is to reject the concept that the dualities are universal, ahistorical, and natural.¹⁵⁹ For instance, the dualisms of Ptolemaic Egypt will not map onto modern dualisms nor necessarily onto pharaonic Egyptian or Greek dualisms. Moreover, they may change over time and space. The next step is to establish whether the dualities are hierarchical and, if they are, whether they are in a “violent hierarchy.”¹⁶⁰ The third task is to establish what holds together the dualistic structures; what is the “center” of power?¹⁶¹ Ultimately, my goal is deconstruction, or “the process of finding and revealing the “center” of a system, showing how the “center” controls the relations of the elements.”¹⁶²

What is the “center” of power? Derrida might answer God/gods or man or “the self.” This answer is dissatisfying, as it was to Foucault, who instead centered discourse in his paradigm.¹⁶³ Structures, then, are constructed by discourse, or discursive practices, such as the presentation and deployment of knowledge and/or the investment of power in institutions and ideologies.¹⁶⁴ Thus, structures are in a constant, dynamic, discursive process of structuration that constructs

¹⁵⁹ This rejection was influenced by Bakhtin’s writings about language, in which he articulated the ideological and political dimensions of language, which were socially conditioned, e.g., Bakhtin (1982) 270-271.

¹⁶⁰ A major principle of post-structuralism is that many binaries are hierarchical. As Derrida writes, in a binary, “one of the two terms governs the other” in a “violent hierarchy” (Derrida, 1981, 41; transl. Bass). For Derrida’s use of “violence,” see Mercier (2020).

¹⁶¹ From Derrida, the “center” is the element of force that holds the structure stable, revealing the “structurality of the structure.” The center governs and limits the structure but stands both inside and outside of it, not being itself “bound by the rules of the structure.” (Klages, 2012, 14-16).

¹⁶² Klages (2012) 14-16. For most post-structuralists, deconstruction is not only about identifying and revealing the center of a system but also overturning the system of binary oppositions. This is at the heart of post-structuralism (or as Derrida prefers, anti-structuralism) and its associated political movements, such as third wave feminism, post-colonialism, and critical race theory.

¹⁶³ Foucault (1981/1970).

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Foucault (2002/1973). By ideology, the “non-evaluative,” Geertzian definition of “an ordered system of cultural symbols” is meant (Geertz, 1973, 196). While ideology can be endowed with power and can be weaponized, it is not innately and fundamental a weapon in the “universal struggle for advantage” (201).

and reveals power.¹⁶⁵ What is more, says Foucault, discursive practices are fragmented, meaning they “cross each other, are sometimes juxtaposed with one another, but can just as well exclude or be unaware of each other.”¹⁶⁶

A border is both an institution and an ideology invested with power. As such, a border serves as an “archive” of discursive practices, which can be used to understand and reveal the central power of a state. The term “archive” is an admittedly ambiguous and loaded term. In this case, “archive” means a repository of tangible and intangible materials in the broadest sense, ranging from written documents to performance practices reconstructed by modern scholars.¹⁶⁷ So, a border is an archive of tangible and intangible materials. Furthermore, a border reifies the center of a state’s power structure, existing both inside and outside of a state. From this liminal position a border limits the structure of the state but is not necessarily bound by the rules of the state.¹⁶⁸ This dissertation starts with the premise that the border can be an archive and archived, meaning that the border can serve as the archive or repository of discursive practices and can be constructed within other archives or discursive practices (*i.e.*, literature). Each of the four

¹⁶⁵ For “structuration” as a process, see Kristeva (1986) 24-33. Foucault, in particular, articulates the concept of power within structures, which includes both political and legal power as well as societal and interpersonal power, e.g., Foucault (1990).

¹⁶⁶ Foucault (1981/1970) 67.

¹⁶⁷ In this dissertation, the meaning of archive is somewhat less abstract than Foucault’s archive as “the system of discursivity,” which he proposes in *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language* (1982/1972, 129; transl. Sheridan Smith). For a good overview of the theories of archives, see Manoff (2004).

¹⁶⁸ A border is more complex than this. A border is usually two-sided and can be constructed differently by either entity. While one state’s constructed border ideology typically creates a hierarchical positionality of one state over the other, the hierarchical positionality might be opposite for the other state. Geopolitical borders have (at least) two simultaneous centers and (at least) two distinct border apparatuses and ideologies, though they may be mutually reinforcing. Thus, organized by the movement of crossing (though not necessarily necessitating an actual crossing of the border), the border between Egypt and Nubia is different as an institution and as an ideology from the border between Nubia and Egypt.

chapters draws on this premise, analyzing and deconstructing the processes in which the ideology of the southern border of Egypt was constructed in the Ptolemaic period, a period of transformation through continuity. The first three chapters study the First Cataract border as an “archive,” and the final chapter studies the Egyptian-Nubian border as archived in Greek literature. Each of these reveals an important aspect about the border and about the Ptolemaic regime.

2.2 Deconstruction

This dissertation is not a history of the border between Egypt and Nubia.¹⁶⁹ While deconstruction is the goal of the dissertation, it is a form of deconstruction-lite, something likely dissatisfying to post-structuralists, feminists, and historians alike. This form of deconstruction does not attempt to overturn binaries, does not have a particular political agenda, is not playing identity politics, and is not attempting to find in Egypt some post-structuralist utopia. Instead, the dissertation attempts to critically examine the structures and their centers of power and to examine the concepts of male/female; Egypt/Nubia; divine/mortal; Egyptian/Nubian; human/animal; human/nature; etc. in a specific time and space.¹⁷⁰ Each chapter presents a case study at the border in which some aspect(s) of these binaries are inverted or subverted.

The choice to use deconstruction, even in the form of deconstruction-lite, as a methodology may exclude the current study as a history entirely.¹⁷¹ As Jane Caplan notes, “deconstruction as an epistemology is virtually incompatible with the historian’s enterprise,”

¹⁶⁹ For the geopolitical concept of borders or frontiers in ancient Egypt, see Galán (1995), Koyano (2001), Török (2008) 7-22.

¹⁷⁰ One influence for thinking about conceptual borders and physical borders together in antiquity is Brown (1982) 1-22.

¹⁷¹ For a discussion of the fervent criticism of deconstruction in the field of history, see Kleinberg (2007).

which is viewed as reconstruction.¹⁷² On the other hand, as Joan Scott notes, a conventional historical study “precludes critical examination of the workings of the ideological system itself, its categories of representation (homosexual/heterosexual, man/woman, black/white, as fixed immutable identities), its premises about what these categories mean and how they operate, and of its notions of subjects, origin, and case.”¹⁷³ Any historical work without critical examination of the ideological system will be “itself a product of the categories of representation that shape it into what it is.”¹⁷⁴ While many historians may eschew deconstruction as a methodology, it is a vital process in understanding the past.

2.3 Ecofeminism

While deconstruction is out of favor (or never was in favor) with historians, it has found prominence in feminist scholarship, as both a theory and a praxis.¹⁷⁵ In particular, deconstruction is useful in disrupting dichotomies and challenging orthodoxies, both of which are feminist goals. Deconstruction, of course, does not mean destruction,¹⁷⁶ a concept clarified by Judith Butler, “to deconstruct the concept of matter or that of bodies is not to negate or refuse either term. To deconstruct these terms means, rather, to continue to use them, to repeat them, to repeat them subversively, and to displace them from the contexts in which they have been deployed as instruments of oppressive power.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Caplan (1989) 270.

¹⁷³ Scott (1988) 6-7.

¹⁷⁴ Kleinberg (2007) 131.

¹⁷⁵ As Mahraj (2010) 1 states: for a feminist student, “deconstruction is *de rigueur*.” For feminism and deconstruction, see Elam (1994); Elam (2001); Jagger (1996); Khalil (2018) 18-20. For objections of feminists to deconstruction, see Grosz (1997) 115-116. Derrida was himself opposed to seeing deconstruction as feminist: “deconstruction is *certainly* not feminist...if there is one thing that it must not come to, it’s feminism” (Derrida, 1985, 30).

¹⁷⁶ Khalil (2018) 18.

¹⁷⁷ Butler (1992) 17.

Moreover, deconstruction is a key force in ecofeminist thought, theory, and praxis.¹⁷⁸ Ecofeminism looks particularly at the intersections of two dualisms—man/woman and culture/nature, claiming that there is a “mutually reinforcing relationship between the devastation of nature and the domination of women.”¹⁷⁹ While not all ecofeminists are deconstructive, many are, using “strategies of liberation by transcending” hierarchical dualisms.¹⁸⁰ In ecofeminist theory, the “deconstruction of one [dualism] leads to an illumination of the other,” with the goal of ending oppression against women and nature.¹⁸¹

There has been significant criticism against ecofeminism, especially claiming that it is essentialist, not transhistorical, and not transcultural.¹⁸² Two critiques of ecofeminism are particularly important for this study. The first is that “the woman-nature affinity is not a cross-cultural phenomenon.”¹⁸³ For instance, Li shows that cultures of ancient China had both a respect for nature and a sexist attitude towards women.¹⁸⁴ In another study, the indigenous women of Chiapas, Mexico, were not found to overidentify with nature. In fact, men were more associated with nature, and women were more associated with culture as culture-preservers.¹⁸⁵ The second critique is that non-hierarchical dualisms, or deconstructed dualisms, do not necessarily mean the end of oppression. For instance, Maruyama discusses Shintoism, Japan’s indigenous religion,

¹⁷⁸ See Soulé and Lease (1995) xv-xvi; Hawkins (1998); Khalil (2018), who provides an ecofeminist deconstruction of dualism in contemporary American women’s writing.

¹⁷⁹ Maruyama (2003) 178. For good overviews of ecofeminism, see Li (1993); Bile (2011); Khalil (2018); Vakoch and Mickey (2018); Bassham (2021).

¹⁸⁰ Maruyama (2003) 178.

¹⁸¹ Bile (2011), citing Seager (1993) 11.

¹⁸² Essentialist: Vakoch and Mickey (2018); Gaard (2011); Not transhistorical: Li (1993) 172; Not transcultural: Li (1993); Eaton and Lorentzen ed. (2003), esp. Nyamweru (2003) 41-56; Lorentzen (2003) 57-72; Maruyama (2003) 177-201.

¹⁸³ Li (1993) 279.

¹⁸⁴ Li (1993) 276.

¹⁸⁵ Lorentzen (2003) 59.

and how it has a mutually concerning, non-hierarchical dualism of man/woman and human/nature but still “permits the destruction of nature and assists the oppression of women.”¹⁸⁶ These cross-cultural examples reveal a flaw, or at least a tension, in the ecofeminist mode of analysis. Nevertheless, it remains a useful heuristic device, an interesting lens through which to think about the questions in the dissertation.

Why ecofeminism? Why nature? The idea to work on ecology and ecofeminism came from the sources themselves. Unexpectedly, each case study had a fundamentally ecological nature. Given the ways gender and nature intersected in the case studies, ecofeminism seemed to be a useful conceptual tool for the dissertation. While it had some utility, it also led at times to misinterpretations, seeing hierarchies that did not exist in the sources. At other times, it helped distinguish the hierarchies. Ultimately, ecofeminism cannot function as a theoretical model for non-Western historical analysis, such as Egypt, but it did help formulate new questions.¹⁸⁷ In the first three case studies, which are tied into a fundamentally Egyptian ecotheological worldview, ecofeminist analysis does not contribute a model. While there were both male/female and human-culture/nature hierarchical dualisms in Egypt, both genders shared affinity with nature.¹⁸⁸ This is particularly true in the realm of the divine, which at times in the Ptolemaic period included the deified royal couple and ancestors. Divinity provided a certain fluidity in gender, morphology—especially between anthropomorphic and zoomorphic presentation, and associations with nature and its phenomena. Such a divine structural fluidity deconstructs itself.

¹⁸⁶ Maruyama (2003) 178-179.

¹⁸⁷ As Bagnall (1997) notes, the value of parallels (and I think of ecofeminism as a parallel) is in “formulating questions, not in providing their answers” (234).

¹⁸⁸ For gender hierarchy, see Roth (2020); for human-culture/nature hierarchy, see Evans (2020). For both genders being associated with nature, see Troy (1997) and Roth (1999).

Thus, these case studies provide a foundation for another example of historical and cross-cultural critique of ecofeminism.

The fourth example, which sits in a cross-cultural, though heavily Hellenized, worldview, however, has more fruitful parallels with ecofeminism. This suggests a cultural difference in the structure of the male/female and culture/nature dualisms between the Egyptian and Greek worldviews in Ptolemaic Egypt. There is a debate among ecofeminists about the origins of dualisms. Do dualisms trace back to Greek society with the Platonic division of body and soul and Aristotelian hierarchical binaries?¹⁸⁹ Or, as more commonly believed especially by spiritual ecofeminists, does it go back to “the dawn of prehistory, when the benign world of the female earth-based goddess was overthrown by the destructive transcendent sky god.”¹⁹⁰ Or, is it linked to the scientific and industrial revolutions, Latour’s modernity.¹⁹¹ This case study contributes to this debate, seeing a noticeable difference between the intersections of nature and gender in the Ptolemaic Egyptian and Greek *milieux*. This suggests that while dualisms certainly existed before and beyond Greek culture, the particular intersections of nature and gender at the core of modern ecofeminist analysis may have their roots in Greek culture.

2.4 Border Theory

The dissertation is also influenced by contemporary border theory, again not necessarily as a model but as a heuristic device that helps formulate questions. The works of Gloria Anzaldúa, Thomas Nail, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have been particularly influential.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Aristotle *Politics*, 1254b 1. 4-5 (1.2.11).

¹⁹⁰ Mellor (2003) 17; cf. Eisler (1988); Plumwood (1993); Ruether (1995). This idea is untenable vis-à-vis Egypt, see Roth (1999).

¹⁹¹ See especially Merchant (2020/1980); Latour (1993) and (2013).

Gloria Anzaldúa's 1987 formative book *Borderlands/La Frontera* is foundational in this dissertation for her conception of the fluidity of the border. Her book has been particularly influential for the ways in which she presents gender and borders as hegemonically conceived as binaries in contrast to the fluidity and plurality of her own gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and experience growing up in the Texas-Mexico borderlands. Anzaldúa uses the metaphor of the border to reify an internal, conceptual ordering process:

In perceiving conflicting information and points of view, she [*la mestiza*] is subjected to a swamping of her psychological borders. She has discovered that she can't hold concepts or ideas in rigid boundaries. The borders and walls that are supposed to keep the undesirable ideas out are entrenched habits and patterns of behavior; these habits and patterns are the enemy within. Rigidity means death. Only by remaining flexible is she able to stretch the psyche horizontally and vertically.¹⁹²

Her use of the border as a metaphor for identity and her identity as a metaphor for the border has been influential in this dissertation for conceiving gender and borders as inextricably linked constructive processes.¹⁹³ In a similar way, as mentioned above in Introduction 1.3, Judith Butler's definition of gender as "an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*" has found a place in border studies.¹⁹⁴ The conceptual link between gender and borders in border studies scholarship provides a foundation for joint focus on both gender and borders in this dissertation.

Border fluidity is an irresistible metaphor for the study of the Egyptian First Cataract border, given its watery nature.¹⁹⁵ Modern references to border fluidity and inundation typically

¹⁹² Anzaldúa (2021/1987) 148.

¹⁹³ This is not to say that gender is the only identity inextricably linked to border construction. Ethnicity is the most obvious identity marker linked to border construction and is well discussed by Anzaldúa and her followers.

¹⁹⁴ Butler (2006/1990) 191; Johnson et al. (2001) 66-67; Salter (2008).

¹⁹⁵ Fluidity and inundation are common metaphors in border studies, see Jimenez, *et al.* (2021).

refer to flows of people, border permeability, and other watery metaphorical conceptions.¹⁹⁶ Not only are inundation metaphors frequent in the discussions of borders, but also rivers often serve as political and territorial borders. According to the Global Subnational River-Borders (GSRB) dataset,¹⁹⁷ large rivers made up at least 23% of the world's interior (non-coastal) national borders in 2020.¹⁹⁸ In these cases, the river itself constitutes the border. In Egypt, however, the Nile itself did not act as the border. It cut vertically through Egypt, dividing its eastern and western banks. Instead, the First Cataract, the combination of rocky outcrops and the flowing water of the Nile, constituted the border. The Egyptian-Nubian border was not a river border but a cataract border, a site that deconstructed the land and water binary. Moreover, given the First Cataract's status as the purported site of the inundation, the kinetic motion of the annual flood of the Nile through the rocks of the First Cataract served as part of the border apparatus.

The role of movement, both the movement of people, animals, and ideas across borders as well as the border's own movement, has been studied in the scholarship of the philosophy of borders.¹⁹⁹ As Nail articulates, all borders move themselves, from the geomorphological, such as the "movement of rivers," to self-decomposition, such as erosion.²⁰⁰ Borders are also moved by others, both territorially and juridically. For instance, the Ptolemaic construction of a border temple at Philae on the southern end of the First Cataract could be considered a movement of the border from the pharaonic border at Syene and Elephantine Island on the northern end of the

¹⁹⁶ See Jimenez, *et al.* (2021); Nail (2019b) 196 for further examples. For instance, a 1923 *Saturday Evening Post* columnist characterized immigration as "a tidal river of labor, of homeless peasantry, surging in, surging out...like a massive sheet of water over a dam" (Jimenez, *et al.*, 2021, 159).

¹⁹⁷ The GSRB is a geospatial dataset of subnational, as well as national, political borders set by large rivers.

¹⁹⁸ Popelka and Smith (2020).

¹⁹⁹ Especially useful are Cooper and Tinning (ed.) (2020); Nail (2016); Nail (2019).

²⁰⁰ Nail (2019) 196.

First Cataract. Furthermore, borders are maintained and reproduced, a “historically contingent, politically charged, dynamic phenomena that first and foremost involve people and their everyday lives.”²⁰¹ An examples of this in Egypt might be the decoration of a temple wall, setting up a bordering inscription, establishing a garrison, etc. In addition to this movement, the border, Nail argues, is mobile because of circulation, the continuous process of being internal and external to a society, constantly both including and excluding, a notion he calls kinopolitical.²⁰² Like in Anzaldúa conception of the border, Nail conceives the border as plural and fluid, making it ripe for deconstruction.

The dissertation is also influenced in particular by the philosophy of bordering presented in Deleuze and Guattari’s 1980 *One Thousand Plateaus*, especially the chapter “The Smooth and the Striated.”²⁰³ The chapter introduces “smoothness and striation as a conceptual pair to rethink space as a complex mixture between nomadic forces and sedentary captures.”²⁰⁴ Like other dualities explored in this dissertation, they are “*de jure* oppositional,” but “*de facto* they only exist in complex mixed forms.”²⁰⁵ As emblematic of a striated space, a border hinders movement; however, a border is also smooth, allowing motion across it, whether purposefully or as leaks. Striation can happen in multiple ways. Deleuze and Guattari point to the state apparatus of striation in both bureaucracy and ideology, not far from Foucault’s discursive practices of institution and ideology.²⁰⁶ In the case of the First Cataract, striation is an ecological phenomenon, both in the rockiness of the cataract landscape and the kinetic flow of the

²⁰¹ Vaughan-Williams (2009) 1.

²⁰² Nail (2019) 198.

²⁰³ Deleuze and Guattari (1987). For an introduction to the text, see Holland (2013).

²⁰⁴ Lysen and Peters (2012) 1.

²⁰⁵ Lysen and Peters (2012) 1.

²⁰⁶ Debrix (1998) 830. In Egypt, the state subsumes the temples and priests.

inundation, which by nature restricts movement. It is further striated through state institutions and ideology, such as the temples, circulation of military and imperial agents, and ecotheologies. The striated space, ultimately “seeks to *territorialize*.”²⁰⁷

Moreover, the structure of the dissertation is informed by the structure of Deleuze and Guattari’s *One Thousand Plateaus*. Inspired by their concept of the rhizome, a nonlinear, nonhierarchical network of multiplicities,²⁰⁸ Deleuze and Guattari organized their inquiries into disjointed, nonlinear, rhizomatic plateaus that can be read non-sequentially. Similarly, the dissertation is organized as a noncomprehensive assemblage of case studies. Each chapter works independently, and the dissertation is non-essentialist, non-totalizing, and receptive to addition.²⁰⁹

The First Cataract border is not a contested frontier but a rhizomatic²¹⁰ node of ecological, cosmological, theological, cultural, ethnic, social, economic, intellectual, and political intersections. These intersections are multidimensional, encompassing geopolitical borders, borders of divine realms, and conceptual borders. In the First Cataract, the border is both the confluence of the Nile inundation with the rocky outcrop of the cataract and the process of ensuring the inundation through the “ecological triangle” of the sovereign(s), the gods, and nature. The border is revealed through the institutions and the ideologies in the border “archive” at the First Cataract as well as archived in texts, images, and traditions of the social and political

²⁰⁷ Debrix (1998) 831. Italics in original.

²⁰⁸ Specifically, rhizomatic means not arborescent, which is Deleuze and Guattari’s term for the unidirectional genealogies ordered by dualism and other totalizing principles.

²⁰⁹ Deleuze and Guattari’s *One Thousand Plateaus* only has thirteen plateaus, presumably more could be added.

²¹⁰ See fn. 208.

imaginaries of Egypt and the wider Hellenistic world. The next section describes the four case studies in detail.

3. Chapter Summaries

3.1 Chapter 1 Summary

The first chapter explores the ways in which the practice of reimagining and transcending the gender binary became a principal feature of Ptolemaic temple theology at the Egyptian southern border through the autochthonous inundation mythologies localized to the First Cataract region. Through an emphasis on gendered dualities at the border, the Ptolemaic dynasty constructed their sovereignty through the combined force of the universal creative powers and the economic and societal infrastructure of regular Nile inundations. The term ‘gendered dualities’ describes the variety of formations of doubling that occurs along and across the gender binary.

The chapter starts by outlining dualities, versus binaries, as a primary organizing structure at borders and in Egyptian theology and cosmogony. The concept is thus reinforced in the ecotheologies of the First Cataract border, especially concerning the inundation. The theological gender dualities at the border are organized into unified monads with ultimate creative power, which are gender fluid, having both male and female aspects, and in differentiated mixed gender couplings or triads, which represent creative potential through union. Having established a topographical, thematic, and theological basis for gendered dualities at the First Cataract, the chapter presents two case studies that explore the adaptations of the autochthonous inundation mythologies along various iterations of gendered dualities in the Ptolemaic period.

The first case study explores triadic doubling through the syncretism of Isis, the Ptolemaic dynasty's patron goddess, with Satis, the local cataract goddess in charge of releasing the inundation and protecting the cataract with her arrows, in the hieroglyphic Hymn IV inscribed on the wall of the inner sanctuary in the temple of Isis at Philae. The second case study looks at the lintel decorations on top of doorways on Philae to demonstrate the shared creative role of Isis and Khnum and theorize a gendered duality interpretation of the temple of Isis at Philae and, ultimately, the entire First Cataract.

3.2 Chapter 2 Summary

This chapter explores a case study of the inundation ecotheologies from the period of Ptolemy III's and Berenike II's rule, specifically around the time of a devastating inundation crisis in the mid-240s BCE. Broadly, the chapter asks, "What is revealed in absence?" Presence/absence is one of the structuring metaphysical dualisms in Western thought, with presence, often characterized as phallogocentric, being privileged over absence. In the inundation crisis of the mid-240s BCE, Egypt was plagued with an absence, an inversion of the typical ordering. Since the Nile inundation is consistently absent in the winter, the absence of the Nile inundation is not a crisis in and of itself but only at certain times. The chapter then contextualizes the absence and looks at the ways in which the absence was attempted to be filled, in this case by a new inundation temple at the First Cataract border—the temple of Isis at Aswan.

The chapter begins with an explanation of the importance of the Nile inundation for measuring Egyptian sovereignty. When the Nile did not flood, the blame was on the king. When the inundation crisis of the mid-240s BCE recalled Ptolemy III from his imperial conquest of Asia, Ptolemy's priorities were to end the ensuing revolt, manage the famine ravaging the country, and further embed himself and his rule in the inundation ecotheologies, especially in the

First Cataract border region. One way in which he accomplished this was by commissioning and decorating the temple of Isis at Aswan, which had a theological focus on fertility and inundation, especially in casting Isis as an inundation goddess. The foundation of the temple of Isis at Aswan suggests a modulation of ancient theology and religious practice to the changing political landscape of Egypt, including remarkable responsiveness to current events. This suggests that the decoration and theological orientation of the temples was not static replication of pharaonic models but rather a dynamic process of transformation through continuity.

The chapter analyzes the Temple of Isis at Aswan, focusing on four areas which have particular importance in the inundation theology: the inner sanctuary, the sanctuary doorway, the central outer doorway, and the festival texts. The central outer doorway, as the main entryway of the temple, linked the external and internal character of Isis, first a goddess who brought forth the inundation for the king and second a goddess who as “head of the army” subjugated foreign countries for the king. The central doorway yoked the internal inundation quality of the border and its external imperial/defensive quality, all mediated through a dynamic process of the “ecological triangle” of the sovereign(s), the gods, and nature.

The chapter ends with a discussion of inundation kings and ecomasculinity, a form of masculinity that promotes a relationship of embodied association and interconnectedness with nature. This affinity between masculinity and nature inverts the typical structures of ecofeminism, suggesting that Egypt is not participatory in the particular hierarchies and affinities of ecofeminism. Moreover, the Ptolemaic sovereign, by participating in the ecotheologies of the First Cataract border, embedded himself into the natural world of Egypt, transcending humanity as both divine and ecological.

3.3 Chapter 3 Summary

This chapter explores the Myth of the Sun's Eye as a border myth. One of the most popular and widespread myths in the Egyptian temples of the Ptolemaic period, the myth tells the story of the Egyptian solar deity's (Ra's) daughter (his Eye or Hathor-Tefnut), who returns to Egypt from a period of absence in Nubia, after her father sent the gods Shu and Thoth to pacify her. The Myth of the Sun's Eye models one form of Egyptian universal kingship, relying on the pacification of Nubia, which played an important function in the Ptolemaic imperial ideology. The myth became a central ideological feature in Ptolemaic temple decoration and architecture throughout Egypt and had particular importance at the First Cataract border, the location of the Eye's return, transformation, and transcendence.

This chapter analyzes the myth through border/migration theory²¹¹ to understand its resonances for the Ptolemaic rulers and the function of its patronage. The myth has been interpreted in a variety of ways, from symbolizing the return of the Nile inundation to the return of the triumphant hero. The Myth of the Sun's Eye is particularly interesting as a model for kinopolitical border circulation, or the circulation of people, institutions, and ideologies for the construction and maintenance of a border.²¹² The myth establishes the border through the transformation of the Eye from anthropomorphic to zoomorphic and back when she transgresses the border. In Egypt, she is a beautiful woman, who defends her father. In Nubia, she is a raging lioness, who destroys the enemies of her father. Furthermore, her return across the First Cataract border is presented as a *hieros gamos*, a sacred sexual act that results in the conception of the king. The significant presence of the iconography and references to the Myth of the Sun's Eye in

²¹¹ Especially Cooper and Tinning (ed.) (2020); Nail (2016); Nail (2019).

²¹² cf. Nail (2019).

the Ptolemaic temples, especially in the First Cataract and the southern borderlands, constructed and maintained the territorial and conceptual border and ritually and ideologically reinforced Ptolemaic subjugation and control of Nubia.

The chapter starts with an explanation of the Myth of the Sun's Eye, the characters of the myth, the place of Nubia in the myth, and the interpretations of the myth. Then, it moves to a discussion of the myth in Philae, especially in the hymns, which feature a particular type of mobility. Then, the mobility or circulation of the myth is analyzed through Thomas Nail's kinopolitical/border circulation theory, which serves as a model for various Ptolemaic and Nubian circulations in the borderlands of Egypt and Nubia, especially military, religious, and administrative circulation. Furthermore, the circulation of the Myth of the Sun's Eye in the temples of the borderlands is demonstrated. Next, there is a case study of an ethnic Egyptian military and religious leader, who lived and participated in the religious life of the First Cataract and circulated in the Nubian borderlands in his role in the military. Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion of time as a bordering technology, specifically through the dedications of the *wensheb*, or the water clock, which was associated with the Myth of the Sun's Eye.

3.4 Chapter 4 Summary

This chapter shifts to a different conception of the border between Egypt and Nubia in the Hellenistic Greek fictional imaginary.²¹³ This chapter focuses on the geopolitical and postmodern borders and bordering between Egypt and Nubia in the Kandake episode in the *Alexander Romance* (3.18-24). This episode imagines fictionalized interactions between Queen Kandake of Meroë and Alexander the Great, first in an exchange of letters and then in a clandestine meeting in Meroë. This episode contributes to the vision of Alexander *kosmokrator* ("ruler of the world"),

²¹³ For a discussion of Greek fiction, see Whitmarsh (2013) 11-34.

which is promoted throughout the *Alexander Romance* and Alexander the Great's afterlife in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, especially in Egypt. As *kosmokrator*, Alexander links a particularly Egyptian view of world domination via, in part, subjugation of Nubia, which flourished in the Ptolemaic period, to Alexander's vision of universal royal ideology, described in later historiographical accounts of his conquests through the term *pothos*, or desire.

In the Kandake episode of the *Alexander Romance*, the border between Egypt and Nubia delineates more than territory but also distinguishes genders, race/ethnicity, and relationship with nature. While these identities fall along typical binaries—male/female; black/white; subjugator/subjugated; and human/nature, the power hierarchies are consistently subverted, revealing more complex power dynamics at play in the imagined borderings between Egypt and Nubia, both in the *Alexander Romance* and in the Ptolemaic empire.

The chapter begins with an introduction to the *Alexander Romance*, including a summary of the plot, the textual history, the Ptolemaic influences on the text, and a discussion of Alexander as *kosmokrator*, or world-ruler, in the text. Next, the Kandake episode (*AR* 3.18-24) is summarized and the discussion of Alexander's role as *kosmokrator* in the context of Nubia is continued. Then, the chapter argues that Queen Kandake is an embodiment of Nubia in the *Alexander Romance*. She is endowed with characteristics that Greeks associated with Aithiopia, the Greek name for her homeland. These characteristics include her role as mother, her piety, her wealth, and her blackness, which is shown to be associated with the natural landscape of Nubia, particularly its famous gold mines. Through this embodiment, the treatment of Kandake in the *Alexander Romance* becomes an allegory for the treatment of Nubia. This is explored in two case studies. The first explores Kandake's border inviolability in Alexander's veiled sexualized threats against the queen. Kandake is shown subverting Alexander's threats by inverting a

traditional Greek marriage ritual, taking the role of the groom to Alexander's bride, following which she bests Alexander. The second case study explores Alexander's imperial gaze and Kandake's commodification, linking his desire for empire to autopsy, which has imperial, commodifying undertones. Kandake bests Alexander by turning her own gaze onto him. Alexander's "imperial gaze" in the *Alexander Romance* is linked to the Ptolemaic "imperial gaze" though the acquisition of ethnographic and geographic knowledge as well as its production and reproduction. More than revealing Nubia, this imperial gaze reveals the identity of the Ptolemaic region through the exploration of the Other.

Unlike the other case studies, this one fits the ecofeminist structure, with Kandake, a woman, being portrayed as having a particular connection to nature. Alexander, a man, has no similar affinity for nature but instead for conquest, adventure, and commodification of nature. Nevertheless, in both case studies, Kandake inverts the binaries, transgressing the expectation of hegemonic, patriarchal imperialism. Whereas in the *Myth of the Sun's Eye*, the female goddess goes out and successfully massacres the Nubians, constructing the border through the subjugation of the Nubians, Alexander only "subjugates" on a technicality, namely by collecting gift-tribute from Kandake, who has bested him and given him clemency. In this case, the *Alexander Romance*, though a fictional account, seems more closely to mirror the historical situation between the Ptolemaic empire and Nubia than accounts at the First Cataract border archive.

4. Conclusion

This dissertation provides a new corpus of scholarship on the Egyptian-Nubian ideological border in the Ptolemaic period through a gendered and human-ecological lens. The dissertation has stakes in the theoretical integration of gender and borders as well as their mutual

role in sovereignty and imperial practice. Outcomes of this integration in the dissertation include the emphasis on border/gender fluidity and border/gender performativity, both innovative approaches to the Ptolemaic Egyptian-Nubian border. Furthermore, the dissertation makes theoretical interventions in ecofeminist thought by presenting case studies that have differing alignments of the intersections of nature and gender, which seem to distinguish the nature/gender alignment in Egyptian and Greek perspectives. This provides a critique of the universality of ecofeminism as well as contributes evidence for the Greek influence of woman-nature affinity noticed in ecofeminist thought.

For Ptolemaic studies, this project makes a number of original contributions. First, it provides the first book-length project on the ideology of the Nubian-Egyptian border in the Ptolemaic period. Second, it forefronts gender as a political and cultural tool beyond Ptolemaic queenship. Third, it models an eclectic, interdisciplinary approach by integrating Egyptian theology, temple texts and decorations, and Greek fiction into a topic that is typically discussed in terms of topography, architecture, administration, and military exploits. Fourth, it focuses on Ptolemaic imperialism from the southern, African perspective instead of the more typical Mediterranean approach. Fifth, it incorporates an ecological perspective into the political and cultural ideology of the Ptolemaic regime through attention to the “ecological triangle” and various forms of nature-gender affinities in the border ideology. These contributions open many new avenues for future study.

CHAPTER 1: FLOODING THE BORDER: GENDERED FLUIDITY AND THE NILE INUNDATION IN THE PTOLEMAIC FIRST CATARACT

1. Introduction

In the late Roman period, the Emperor Constantine passed a law that commanded the extermination of a priesthood of effeminate men (δι' ἀνδρῶν ἐκτεθηλυμμένων), whose worship of the Nile was considered by the Egyptian inhabitants to be fundamental to ensuring Egypt's yearly inundation.¹ While the “depravity” (ἀσέλγεια) of this “race of androgynes” (τὸ τῶν ἀνδρογύνων γένος) is certainly an exaggeration of Christian polemic, the transgression of the gender binary was a part of the worship of the Nile inundation for millennia. In this chapter, I explore another imperial regime's markedly different response to the “androgyny,” or gender duality, of the Egyptian inundation theology. I show that unlike Constantine's violent response to religious non-binary gender expression, centuries earlier the Ptolemaic rulers embraced and developed the gendered dualities of Egyptian autochthonous inundation theologies, which became an important feature of their imperial and colonial ideology and power construction in the borderlands and throughout Egypt.

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which this practice of reimagining and transcending the gender binary became a principal feature of Ptolemaic temple theology at the Egyptian southern border through the autochthonous inundation mythologies localized at the First Cataract region. Through an emphasis on gendered dualities at the border,² the Ptolemaic dynasty constructed their sovereignty through the combined force of the universal creative powers and the economic and societal infrastructure of regular Nile inundations. I use the term gendered

¹ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 4.25.

² Though not exclusively at the border.

dualities to describe the variety of formations of doubling that occurs along and across the gender binary.

I start by providing an overview of the autochthonous inundation ecotheologies of the Nile First Cataract. Then, I outline dualities, versus binaries, as a primary organizing structure at borders generally and in Egyptian theology and cosmogony. The concept is thus reinforced in the ecotheologies of the First Cataract border, especially concerning the inundation. I organize the theological gender dualities at the border into unified monads with ultimate creative power, which are gender fluid, having both male and female aspects, and in differentiated mixed gender couplings or triads, which represent creative potential through union. Having established a topographical, thematic, and theological basis for gendered dualities at the First Cataract, I turn to two case studies that explore the adaptations of the autochthonous inundation mythologies along various iterations of gendered dualities in the Ptolemaic period.

The first case study explores the construction of a gendered duality through the syncretism of Isis, the Ptolemaic dynasty's patron goddess, with Satis, the local cataract goddess in charge of releasing the inundation and protecting the cataract with her arrows, in the hieroglyphic Hymn IV inscribed on the wall of the inner sanctuary in the temple of Isis at Philae. The second case study looks at the lintel decorations on top of doorways on Philae to demonstrate the shared creative role of Isis and Khnum and theorize a gendered duality interpretation of the temple of Isis at Philae and, ultimately, the entire First Cataract.

2. Dualities and Gender Dualities

A border is a place of simultaneous and mutually reinforcing separation and contact.³ Through its function of connecting and dividing, a border has an innate duality.⁴ Dualistic conceptions of gender can also be yoked. In the case of the gender binary expressed in a male/female heterosexual pairing, the connection happens through sexual union, which results in offspring through reproduction. In the case of the gender binary expressed within one entity or monad, such as the Egyptian deity Nun discussed in Sections 2.2 and 3.2 below, the connection manifests as gender fluidity, which results in autogenous creation.⁵ The First Cataract of the Nile, like all borders, was a place of dualities.⁶ As a liminal site of creation, the First Cataract border also encompassed and yoked gender dualities both monadic and through heterosexual union, seemingly erasing both difference and hierarchy. This section looks closer at the dualities built into the structure of the First Cataract and especially the gender dualities that constructed the inundation ecotheologies of Egypt at the First Cataract. Like other Egyptian mythologies, the

³ Popescu (2012) 9, 11. Thus, borders do not operate along a “simplistic binary.”

⁴ Parmar (2020) 178-179: “The duality of borders is also an often-cited theme.”

⁵ The definition of gender fluid is itself fluid. One holistic definition is “experience of one’s own gender as neither man nor woman, both man and woman, or acknowledging change over the life course between and beyond these options, including such categories as nonbinary, agender, and genderqueer” (Sumerau et al., 2019, 206). See also Monro (2019) for the similar term ‘genderqueer.’

⁶ Egypt was a country of dualities, which were not limited to the border regions. For instance, Egypt is a double country (*tꜥ.wy*, also in dual), consisting of “Upper and Lower Egypt,” which were symbolized by several paired objects: the lotus and the papyrus, Wadjet and Nekhbet, the red crown and the white crown, the cobra and the vulture, the reed and the bee, etc. The temples were set up in symmetry highlighting the dualities. For instance, if the king wears the white crown in one relief, in the opposite relief, he will wear the red crown. The cultic geography of the Egypt was also expressed in dualities: Osiris had a cult site in Abydos in the Nile valley and Busiris in the Delta. Troy (1986) 8 provides citations; Servajean (2008). There is no comprehensive study on the concept of duality in ancient Egypt.

inundation ecotheologies at the First Cataract functioned to “resolve life’s paradoxes found in the relationship of oppositions, the co-existence of life and death, day and night, male and female.”⁷

2.1 The Two Caverns

Grammatically, the source of the Nile was conceived of in the dual number: *kr.ty*, the “two caverns.” The original meaning and location of the “two caverns” is unclear. It is certainly related to the cave-like grotto under the Satis temple on Elephantine, which dates to 3200 BCE. Whether the twin is a feature of this temple’s cave or in a different location altogether (possibly Sehel island) is unknown. It does seem that originally the two caverns were somewhere near Elephantine Island.⁸ In the Ptolemaic period, the designation “two caverns” was used whether discussing Biggeh, Elephantine/Aswan, or both. In fact, the emphasis on duality could be responsible for the flexibility of the location of the border and the source of the inundation in the Ptolemaic period.⁹

As a result of the dual nature of the twin caverns, the source of the Nile inundation was represented also as other naturally paired items. The term *kr.ty*, the word for the “two caverns,” meant a door socket in general usage.¹⁰ Both usages are found in the “Famine Stele.” First, the cataract water is called the “twin caverns.” Second, Khnum’s temple is said to have “two sockets,” referring to the architectural feature. Ancient Egyptian doors did not have hinges, like

⁷ Troy (1986) 8.

⁸ Herodotus 2.28.

⁹ For instance, in Ptolemy IX’s trip to the Cataract in August/September 115 BCE recorded in *OGIS* 168, he performs two rituals related to the Nile inundation. The first is at the place where the Nile wells ups (τὸν ὑπάρχοντα περὶ Ἐλεφαντίνην καταράκτην) and the second was at the islands, which were the so-called source (or spring) of the Nile ([εἰς τὰς προκειμένας νήσους,] ἐν αἷς ἢ τοῦ Νείλου πηγῇ ὀνομαζομένη). This suggests that the idea of two sources of the Nile was part of the ritual practice in the Ptolemaic period. Transl. from Piejko (1992); See also, Strack 1897; Dittenberger, *OGIS* 168 Lenger 1980.

¹⁰ *WB* V, 58/2.

modern doors, but instead rotated on pivots in holes that were bored into the stone lintel and the floor. Two door sockets were required for any door to open and close properly, which is why they were conceived of in the dual. The reference to Khnum's temple's door sockets is certainly a pun for the "twin caverns." Moreover, the rest of the passage declares Khnum's power over the Inundation:

"The wellspring, I have released it. I know the Inundation will embrace the fields with an embrace that joins life to every nostril, even as embracing the field will rejuvenate it. Thus, I shall have the Inundation flow forth for you, with no year of want or sluggishness for any land. The fields will grow, bowed down beneath the growth of their meal."

As discussed above, the "Famine Stele" uses the door imagery to characterize the release of the flood: Khnum "holding the door bolt in his hand, opening the (flood)gates as he wishes." As the doorway is a border between one space and another, the First Cataract is a border both between the mortal world and the underworld and between Egypt and Nubia.

In the *Famine Stele*, the Twin Caverns are said to be "the breasts that nourish all," another natural pair.¹¹ In the Late Period, the Nile flood was represented as discharging from the breasts of Hapy, the Inundation god who was represented with female sexual characteristics, such as adipose fat and breasts.¹² In Philae, on the vestibule of Caracalla on the roof of the main temple, Hapy is shown holding his breast, which streams inundation waters, and a frog streaming waters from its mouth in the other hand.¹³ Throughout Egypt, Hapy and other similar Nile

¹¹ Famine Stele, 7-8. That the "breasts that nourish all" are also represented by Hapy seizing the shore and "fecundating by mounting as a male, a bull to a female, renewing his virility, providing for his desire" is discussed below. Simpson (2003) 386-391.

¹² In one instance, Hapy is represented as female in the temple of Seti I at Qurna (Williams 2011, 223; Baines 1985, 120 and 172). He is at times shown with breasts but without a phallus.

¹³ PM 391 and 394. Baines fig. 81a and 81b; pp. 118-120.

fecundity deities hold double *kbh*-vases streaming with water in front of their breasts, which serve as proxies for their breasts and represent the nourishing flood.¹⁴

2.2 The Borders of the Abyss, Gender Dualities, and Creative/Reproductive Potential

The First Cataract was believed to be the location where the Primeval Waters, the ultimate creative force deified as Nun, seeped from the underworld into the mortal world each year in the form of the inundation. The First Cataract was thus a border between the mortal plain and the underworld abyss,¹⁵ the site of creation in Egyptian cosmogony.¹⁶ As the border of the abyss,¹⁷ the First Cataract was associated with the act of creation in Egyptian mythology, which itself was a bordering act that defines existence through the creation of “order” (*ma’at*) or distinguishing identity borders. Creation arose out of the Primeval Waters—boundless, dark, and inert, deified as the god Nu or Nun. The waters held the potential for all life and held a oneness in undifferentiated Monad with the potential for differentiation that led to creation.¹⁸

¹⁴ The flood was also associated with the breast milk of Isis, such as in the *Pyramid Texts* from the Old Kingdom: “Raise yourself, O King! You have your water, you have your inundation, you have your milk which is from the breasts of Mother Isis” (Pyr. 734. Oestigaard, 2011, 53). Isis’ breast milk, associated with the inundation waters, was used both to revivify her murdered brother-husband Osiris and to nourish her son Horus.

¹⁵ Herodotus 2.28.4 uses the term ἄβυσσοι to describe the springs of the Nile at the Cataract. Generally, the word means “bottomless” or “unfathomed” in its adjectival form, but as a noun, the word also means “the great deep” and “the underworld.” cf. Euripides *Phoenician Women*: 1604-5: Ταρτάρου γὰρ ὄφελεν / ἐλθεῖν Κιθαιρῶν εἰς ἄβυσσα χάσματα: “would that Cithaeron had sunk into hell’s yawning abyss, because it did not destroy me”.

¹⁶ Cf. for a similar conception of the border between heaven and earth in Greco-Roman cultures, see Rousselle (ed.) (1995) 1-16 and Chazalon (1995).

¹⁷ I borrow the term from the Greek magical papyri: *PGM IV*. 1117-21: “Hail, spirit who extends from heaven to earth, ERDENEU, and from earth which is in the middle chamber of the / universe unto the borders of the abyss, MEREMOGGA;” χαῖρε, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ διήκον / ἀπὸ οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ γῆν ερδηνευ / καὶ ἀπὸ γῆς τῆς ἐν μέσῳ κύτει τοῦ κό- / σμου ἄχρι τῶν περάτων τῆς ἄβύσσου / μερεμογγα.

¹⁸ Nu or Nun (*nw*) was the Primeval Waters. The ancient Egyptian’s had a concept “of the universe as a limitless ocean of dark and motionless water, within which the world of life floats as a sphere of air and light.” Nun existed in the netherworld and above the sky (*pt*) (cf. Cenotaph of Seti I at Abydos: Allen (1988), in which Nun is called “the united darkness (*kk.w zm’w*), fount

While a full account of Egyptian cosmogony is beyond the scope of this project, a short summary of cosmogonical principles, especially those relevant to the First Cataract are important for understanding the role of gender dualities, creation, and inundation. Egyptian cosmogonical systems varied by region and historical period but can be categorized into three overarching systems—the Heliopolitan, the Memphite, and the Hermopolitan.¹⁹ The first two of these are most important for this discussion.²⁰ In the Heliopolitan cosmogony, the Primeval Waters of Nun were the site of first creation, from which the Primordial Mound (Benben) rose. From the generative waters of the Nun, the god Atum created himself by separating and organizing the Primeval Waters.²¹ Through a self-stimulatory act of creation, Atum created the god Shu and the goddess Tefnut. In this act, Atum, who describes himself as gender fluid—“I am the male and female”—in the *Coffin Texts*,²² self-procreates, as stated in the Bremner Rhind Papyrus, in the following way: “I acted as husband with my fist, I copulated with my hand.”²³ When a drop of semen fell into his mouth, he “spat out” the deities Shu and Tefnut, thus first separating the

of the gods” (Text 1 l.1)). It is the “fount of the gods” because it is the watery demiurge. The word “fount” is *kbh.w*, the same word that is used to name the Cataract, as well as the cold water that comes from region, and the libation vessels used to pour out the water (For an example of *kbh.w* used in this way, see the lintel of the main doorway of the Temple of Isis at Aswan (Bresciani and Pernigotti, 1978, 45, B.3.c.) and Section 2.4.1-3 below). The Primeval Waters were “the source of water in this world, especially that of the Nile.” In the “netherworld” conception of Nu, the “Egyptians often used a feminine counterpart of *nw*, *n(n)wt* or *nnt*, which the Greeks called *nauni* (Naunet) (Allen, 1988, 4).

¹⁹ For an overview of Egyptian cosmogony in the Late to Ptolemaic and Roman periods, see McClain (2011).

²⁰ The Hermopolitan cosmogonical system is structured as an Ogdoad of four pairs of primordial male and female deities, one of which is Nun and Nunet (often spelled Naunet), Nun’s female counterpart. The Hermopolitan cosmogonical system was present in Philae along with the Heliopolitan and Memphite cosmogonies, but its influence is not well understood (McClain, 2011, 6). For the Hermopolitan cosmogony, see McClain (2011) 3; Allen (1988); Roeder (1952) 366-439; Zivie-Coche (2009).

²¹ Atum is referred to as either sitting on the Benben or with the Benben itself.

²² Servajean (2008) 3; Sauneron (1961) 242-244; *Coffin Texts* spell II, 161a.

²³ Roth (1999) 196.

genders.²⁴ From Shu and Tefnut, the deities Geb and Nut were born, who engendered Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys. Osiris and Isis produced Horus. This godly lineage descended from Atum is called the Heliopolitan Ennead.

In the Memphite cosmogony, the god Ptah or (Ptah-Tatenen),²⁵ the patron god of Memphis, is said to bring forth Atum and the rest of the Heliopolitan Ennead.²⁶ In the Ptolemaic period, Ptah-Tatenen was worshipped as “creator of the cosmos” and “father of the gods and goddesses.”²⁷ In his cosmogenic role, Ptah-Tatenen was sometimes characterized as having both male and female qualities. In the Shabaka Stone,²⁸ the most important source for the Memphite cosmogony, Ptah is characterized in the following way:

- 48) The gods have come into existence from Ptah
- 49a) Ptah on the great seat
- 50a) Ptah-Nun, the father (who begot) Atum
- 51a) Ptah-Nunet, the mother who bore Atum²⁹

²⁴ Van Dijk (1979/80) 13.

²⁵ Tatenen is the name of the Primeval Mound in the Memphite cosmogony, parallel to the Benben in the Heliopolitan cosmogony. In the Heliopolitan cosmogony, Atum is sometimes identified as the Benben. In similar way, Ptah is identified with Tatenen. More broadly, Tatenen refers to the silt of the Nile.

²⁶ The reason for the inclusion of Ptah-Tatenen as creator is debated. Most scholars propose a political explanation, seeing the move as a “polemic against a competing theology,” namely the priests of Memphis attempting to discredit or subsume the Heliopolitan cosmogony (Bodine, 2009, 17; Lichtheim, 1973, 54-56; McClain, 2011, 3). Other scholars favor a purely theological explanation (Bodine, 2009, 17-18; Iversen, 1990, 489-490).

²⁷ McClain (2011) 3.

²⁸ The Shabaka Stone (or Shabaqo Stone) is a complicated text. It was inscribed in the 25th Dynasty and claims to refer to be a copy of a text from the Old Kingdom, which Shabaka, a Kushite pharaoh of Egypt, found in the Temple of Ptah in Memphis. The text is written in Old Egyptian and was once thought to have been a genuine copy of a document from the Old Kingdom (Junker, 1939, 6-16; Sethe, 1928, 2-5; Frankfort, 1978, 24; Wilson, 1958, 1; Lichtheim, 2006, 51). Now more scholars argue that the text is an archaizing effort of a new composition from the that might have relied on New Kingdom material (Junge 1973; Schlögl, 1980, 110-117; Allen, 1988, 38-43; cf. Iversen, 1990, 490; Lieven, 2007, 255-257). See Bodine (2011) for an introduction to the Shabaka Stone.

²⁹ Finnestad (1976) 83.

This text expresses the male and female qualities innate within Ptah. Through his gender fluid nature, Ptah has the potential for both self-generation and independent generation of Atum. As both mother and father of Atum, Ptah is associated with the male and female forms of Nun, the Primeval Waters. By the New Kingdom, Ptah was called the “fashioner of Earth” and “father of gods” in his role as creator god.³⁰ In a prayer to Ptah dating from the rule of Ramses III in the 20th Dynasty, Ptah-Tatenen characterized as:

father of the gods, great god of the first time, former of men, maker of gods, beginning that became the first primeval being, after whom happened all that came to pass, who made heaven after the conception of his mind, who suspended it by the elevation of the atmosphere, who founded the earth by that which he himself did, who surrounded it with Nun, and the sea; who made the nether world, who satisfied the dead, and caused the sun to come to prosper them, as ruler of eternity, lord of everlastingness; lord of life, who fills the throat and gives breath to every nostril; who preserves alive all men by his sustenance. Lifetime, destiny and bringing up are under his authority, men live by that which comes out of his mouth; maker of offerings for all the gods, in his form as Nun, the great; lord of eternity, everlastingness is under his authority; breath of life for all people; leading the king to his great throne in his name: King of the Two Lands.³¹

In this text, Ptah-Tatenen is the demiurge, the creator of humans, gods, the heavens, the netherworld, and the earth with all that is on it. Ptah-Tatenen is again characterized as Nun in his creative powers.³²

The Memphite cosmogony is highly influential in the cosmogonical system of the First Cataract, especially referring to Khnum at Elephantine. Khnum’s cosmogonical nature is featured in another archaizing text the *Famine Stele*, which was inscribed into a “living” rock on Sehel Island in the First Cataract.³³ Khnum states about himself:

³⁰ Hart (2005) 154; Najovits (2003) 111, citing the Berlin Papyrus 3048.

³¹ Breasted (1906) 4:162-163, 4.308.

³² Later in the same text, Ptah will be characterized as Ptah-Nun in the *Feast of the “First-of-the-Flood”* (Breasted, 1906, 4:168, 4.330).

³³ *Famine Stele*: Simpson (2003) 386-391. Brugsch (1891); Vandier (1936); Barguet (1953); Goedicke (1994); Hallo and Younger (2002); Quack (1997) 297-300; Casanova (1984); Haiying (1998); Gasse and Rondot (2004) and (2007).

For I am the lord of fashioning, I am the one who fashioned himself, the very great Abyss (Nun), who came into being at the first, the Inundation (Hapy) who courses / as he wills, who crafts mankind, who guides every man in his (critical) hour, Tatenen, the father of the gods, Shu the great, the chief of heaven.³⁴

In this passage, Khnum relates himself to the Memphite cosmogony and specifically to Ptah-Tatenen through associations with and characterization as “the lord of fashioning,” his self-generative nature, Nun, and Tatenen. Sharing in the gender fluid nature of Ptah-Tatenen, Khnum inhabits the role of creator deity and the father of the gods.³⁵

Moreover, the inundation waters at the First Cataract are associated with the primordial waters and the islands of the First Cataract, especially Sehel, Philae, Biggeh, and Elephantine, are associated with the Primeval Mound.³⁶ For instance, in “The Famine Stele,” Elephantine Island is the mound that arose from the primordial waters, where Atum first manifested:

There is a city in the midst of the flood waters. The Inundation surrounds it. Elephantine is its name. It is the first of the first. It is the first nome adjacent to Wawat (Lower

³⁴ Simpson (2003) 386-391.

³⁵ Khnum’s association with Hapy also points to his gender fluidity. Hapy lives within the Nun waters and is often presented as gender fluid, being male with the female principle within himself. The gender of Hapy is debated. He is sometimes considered androgynous because of his pendulous breasts and wide hips (cf. Griffiths, 1966, 61; Kákosy, 1982). In his study of Egyptian fecundity figures, Baines (1985), however, argues that Hapy is not male with female sexual characteristic but instead reads his adipose fat and full breasts as a physical manifestation of abundance and comfort, a godly *tryphe*. (cf. Bonnet, 1952, 526). The fact that Hapy’s breasts are occasionally depicted streaming liquid from the nipples suggests that, at least in the late period, there is more than just portly abundance on display (Junker, 1913, 61; Williams, 2011, 155; PM 391 and 394; Baines fig. 81a and 81b; pp. 118-120. Baines denies that these flowing breasts mean that Hapy was androgynous. Bonnet, however, admits that Hapy’s streaming breasts may have female significance (Bonnet, 1952, 526). In one instance, Hapy is represented as female in the temple of Seti I at Qurna (Williams, 2011, 223; Baines, 1985, 120 and 172). He is at times shown with breasts but without a phallus.

³⁶ While benben is the name for the Primeval Mound in the Heliopolitan mythology, the Memphite mythology calls the mound Ta-tenen, which is also used to refer to the silt of the Nile. Khnum, the main cataract deity, is closely associated with Ta-tenen, mainly for his work creation with the potter’s wheel, using the clay of the Nile silt. The Great Hymn of Khnum from the Greco-Roman Period says about Khnum: “You are Ptah-Tatenen, creator of creators, / Who in Iunyt brought forth all that is” and “He [Khnum] created precious things in their lands, / That they might bear their products abroad, / For the lord of the wheel is their father too, / Tatenen who made all that is on their soil.” Lichtheim (2006) 113, 115.

Nubia). Earthly mound and celestial height, it is the seat of Ra when he calculates life before everyone.³⁷

The cycle of the inundation recreates the first eruption of the Primeval Mound from the abyss, causing the First Cataract islands to contract and erupt, so that that the flood waters perpetually birth the land. The control of the inundation at the First Cataract is a fundamental aspect of a creator deity, which must embody the primordial, gender-dual creative force. While Khnum inhabited this role for millennia, during the Late Period and especially in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, Isis increasingly inhabited this role, especially by direct association with Khnum.

In addition to the creator deities and Hapy, other deities in the First Cataract were portrayed as gender fluid. For instance, in a Ptolemaic funerary stele found on El-Hesa Island, the largest and most southerly island in the First Cataract, the four “sons” of Horus—Hapy, Qebhsenuf, Imset, and Duamutef—are presented as gender fluid.³⁸ In the iconography the “sons” are portrayed in robes that look distinctly feminine.³⁹ Moreover, in the writing of the names of the deities, all of the “sons,” except Hapy, have feminine determinatives.⁴⁰ These deities, along with the others mentioned in the stele, are identified as ensuring “all good and pure things, given by heaven, created by earth, brought by Nile from his cavern.”⁴¹ The gender fluidity of the deities represents the creative potential of the gender duality of the autochthonous ecotheologies of the inundation at the Nile First Cataract.

³⁷ Allen (1988) 25.

³⁸ Aswan 1057; See Ray (1987) and (1989). This inscription is discussed in more detail in Ch. 3.

³⁹ Ray (1987) 170.

⁴⁰ Ray (1987) 171. Since Hapy typically has an ambiguous gender presentation, the lack of a feminine determination for only him is unusual and is likely an omission

⁴¹ Aswan 1057, hieroglyphic version, l. 3; transl. Ray, 1987, 172.

Gender fluidity was also a feature of the priests of the inundation. Worshippers of the Sun's Eye, an alternate inundation of the Nile inundation at the First Cataract, were called "a corporation of women-men" (*h s-hm.t-hwt.w*) in the *Sonnenauge*, a demotic text of the Roman period.⁴² Though the meaning of the term is debated, Depauw argues that in this context the term is meant to signify a group of people who are androgynous, embodying both masculine and feminine genders. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, in the Roman period, the priests who worshipped the Nile were characterized as "effeminate men" (δι' ἀνδρῶν ἐκτεθηλυμμένων) and "the race of androgynes" (τὸ τῶν ἀνδρογύνων γένος) by the late Roman author Eusebius.⁴³ While the text is certainly polemical, it does not mean that the priesthood exhibited some element of gender fluidity. In both cases, the gender fluid expression of the worshippers of the Nile inundation may have imitated the gender duality of the Nile ecotheologies, symbolizing ultimate creative potential.

Not every act of creation related to the inundation was autogenous. The copulative act is at the heart of many of the inundation ecotheologies at the First Cataract border. While the creative life force of the primordial waters and the great creator deities held within it the necessary elements of life, post-creation, these elements were cleaved apart and required unification to recall creative potential. One such unification was sexual union between the floodwaters and the land, which resulted in vegetative fertility. In the "Famine Stele," Hapy "[seizes(?)] the shore, fecundating by mounting as a male, a bull to a female, renewing his virility, providing for his desire, surging at twenty-eight cubits and passing Sema-behdet [in the

⁴² P. Leiden I 384; Depauw (2003); W. Spiegelberg, (1917); Cenival (1988).

⁴³ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 4.25.

Delta] at seven.” Here, as the Nile flood, Hapy mounts and inseminates the female shore with an impressive twenty-eight-cubit surge.⁴⁴

The sexual union of Isis and Osiris was especially symbolic of the union of the flood and the land in the act of creation and fertility. As reported by Plutarch, “among the Egyptians such men say that Osiris is the Nile consorting with the Earth, which is Isis.”⁴⁵ In a hymn to Osiris and Isis on the inner passage of the central doorway of the 1st Pylon at Philae, Osiris is called Orion, while Isis is called Sothis; Osiris is called the flood, while Isis the countryside. Plutarch links these very ideas together to provide a birth story for Horus:

Of the stars the Egyptians think that the Dog-star is the star of Isis, because it is the bringer of water...As they regard the Nile as the effusion of Osiris, so they hold and believe the earth to be the body of Isis, not all of it, but so much of it as the Nile covers, fertilizing it and uniting with it. From this union they make Horus to be born.⁴⁶

In another version of Horus’ conception, outlined in the Myth of the Sun’s Eye, the goddess Hathor (associated with Isis), who has crossed the border from Nubia at the First Cataract,

⁴⁴ This is a crude exaggeration of his virility. The greatest increase of the Nile was recorded in the Roman period at eighteen cubits. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 5.57-59. The perfect rise, claims Pliny, is sixteen cubits. At twelve cubits, the country will revert to famine; at thirteen, hunger. The smallest rise is that of five during Cleopatra VII’s reign, which coincides with volcanic records (see Chapter 2.2-3). The exaggeration is not benign. Such a flood would be its own disaster by destroying the crops. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 5.58, 18.168; Ammianus Marcellinus (22.15.13). Such calamities are a favorite of the poet Dioscorides: *Palatine Anthology* 9.568: “Nile, rising in vast volume, thou hast carried away in thy random course the farm of Aristagoras and all his possessions. But the old man himself, abandoning all hope, swam, clinging to a clod of his own land, to his neighbor’s half-destroyed farm, saying; O long toil and useless work of my aged arms, ye are all become water, and this wave so sweet to farmers was the bitterest of floods for Aristagoras;” and *Palatine Anthology* 7.76: “Philocritus, his trading over and yet a novice at the plough, lay buried at Memphis in a foreign land. And there the Nile running in high flood stripped him of the scanty earth that covered him. So, in his life he escaped from the salt sea, but now covered by the waves hath, poor wretch, a shipwrecked mariner’s tomb.”

⁴⁵ Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, 33.1

⁴⁶ Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, 38.1

celebrates her return with a *hieros gamos*, or sacred sexual act, presumably with the cataract inundation waters. Nine months following her return, the god-king Horus was born.⁴⁷

The emphasis on the royal couple in Ptolemaic ideology and iconography, as well as the strategy of brother-sister marriage, may have been influenced by the importance of these unifying godly couplings.⁴⁸ Ptolemaic sibling marriage was not only analogous to Isis and Osiris' union but also represented the cosmic life force channeled through the Nile inundation.⁴⁹ For instance, the identification of Ptolemy III and Berenike II with Orion (Osiris) and *Hydrochous* (Sothis/Isis) in Callimachus' poem "The Lock of Berenike" translated by Catullus allegorized the Ptolemaic couple's sexual union as the commencement of the Nile inundation, which would end a drought and famine, saving the Egyptian people, an act for which they, in part, received the title *Euergetes* ("benefactor").⁵⁰ The royal couple functioned as a unit in Ptolemaic ideology, both parts of which were crucial for ensuring the cosmic order, the Nile inundation, and the good rule of Egypt.

2.3 Triadic Dualities at the First Cataract

Triad formations of deities were a common feature of Egyptian religion, which were organized within theological contexts of major religious centers.⁵¹ A major function of the divine triadic structure was "connecting plurality and unity," "transforming polytheism into tritheism or

⁴⁷ Discussed in more detail in Ch. 3.

⁴⁸ Buraselis (2008) 291-302.

⁴⁹ Ager (2006) argues that Ptolemaic sibling marriage was symbolic of power through excess and the "breaching of limits," related to *tryphe* of "luxury." This was linked to an emphasis on "luxury and ostentatious display," including having plenty for overconsumption and for benefaction (*euergetism*) (177-179). The association with the Nile inundation, fertility, and abundance would fit within this philosophy of excess.

⁵⁰ Callimachus *Aetia* frag 110 in *PSI* 1092 and *POxy.* 2258C; Catullus 66; Vitelli (1929a, 1929b); Lobel (1952); Gutzwiller (1992); cf. Oppen de Ruiter (2015) 76, 87-8.

⁵¹ Sales (2012).

differentiated monotheism.”⁵² *Contra* te Velde, both triads of a single gender and mixed gender triads had within them the creative potential of the monadic creator deities.⁵³ In the First Cataract, there were two major triads, the Philean Triad of Isis, Osiris, and Horus local to Philae and the Cataract Triad of Khnum, Satis, and Anukis local to Elephantine.⁵⁴

With the introduction of Philae as a major cult center in the Late Period and especially the Ptolemaic period, the Philean triad consistently doubled the Cataract triad at the temple of Isis at Philae as well as at the temple of Isis at Aswan, meaning that both triads (or representatives from both triads) were portrayed together. This doubling saw Isis associated with both the female and male aspects of the Cataract Triad, further suggesting her role as a creator god with gender-fluid⁵⁵ role. This is especially true for Isis’s association with Khnum, which mutually reinforced their self-generative creative potential, expressed through their relationship

⁵² te Velde (1971) 80.

⁵³ While te Velde (1971) 80 argues that “because of the nature of binary oppositions within the triad, its monistic tendency could not always be realized” and that for “triads containing the binary opposition of male and female, the way from plurality to unity is obstructed.” This obstruction, however, is not necessary. While the heterosexual couple is marked by difference, the couple is unified through the *hieros gamos*, the sacred sexual act, within the triads, which typically results in a child, the third member of the triad. While the heterosexual couple is binary, it is not in opposition but in union.

⁵⁴ Hathor could be added to the triads or take the place of Isis, Satis, or both Satis and Anukis. One thing to note is the dualities of the attributes of the deities within the triads, one often peaceful and creative and the other violent and destructive/defensive. For instance, Isis is both the “giver of life” and she “who smites millions by cutting off their heads” (Žabkar, 1988, Hymn IV and Hymn V); Satis has a dual role of pouring the inundation and shooting her arrows at the enemy; and Hathor’s roles are doubled as the goddess of jubilation, song, and dance, and the lioness goddess who rages through Nubia. In the case of Satis and Hathor, their attributes change at the border. For instance, Satis pours the inundation within the border of Egypt, but shoots her arrows at the enemy outside of the border. Isis, however, is the “giver of life” in both Upper Egypt and Lower Nubia, such as in the temple of Musawwarat es Sufra (Hallof, 2006, 61-62; Isis *Lebensspenderin*).

⁵⁵ The definition of gender fluid is itself fluid. One holistic definition is “experience of one’s own gender as neither man nor woman, both man and woman, or acknowledging change over the life course between and beyond these options, including such categories as nonbinary, agender, and genderqueer” (Sumerau *et al.*, 2020, 206).

with the inundation and other creative acts, through their familial triadic identities, and through various forms of syncretism and doubling in the temples of the First Cataract.

3. The Case Studies

In the rest of this chapter, I explore the two temples of Isis and demonstrate the centrality of the inundation in both, which is often overlooked in the scholarship of the region in the Ptolemaic period. In these case studies, I focus on instances of the doubling of Isis with both male and female cataract deities through syncretism and direct association in the temples as well as displays of universal, creative power in relation to the inundation, which I use to suggest a new approach to reading the theology of the inundation at the First Cataract.

3.1 Isis and Satis in Hymn IV in the Temple of Isis at Philae

This first case study explores the way that Isis is portrayed as a universal, creator god in Hymn IV in the inner sanctuary of the Temple of Isis at Philae. Hymn IV, which serves as the ritual center of the inner sanctuary, features Isis' role as an inundation goddess. In this hymn, she takes on many attributes of Ptah-Tanenen and Khnum, which point to her gender fluidity. She, however, maintains her female identity, such as her role as wife and mother, which is emphasized by her named association with the local cataract goddess Satis in the hymn.

Following his conquest of Nubia, Ptolemy II used his spoils to commission a temple of Isis at Philae.⁵⁶ The cult of the temple was highly influential in developing Isis as a patron goddess to the Ptolemaic dynasty, especially in her development as a universal, creator goddess.⁵⁷ In this role, she adopts attributes that are associated with mainly male creator gods, which are woven with her primary role as divine mother and devoted spouse.

⁵⁶ See Chapter 2.4.2.2.

⁵⁷ Female creator and fertility goddesses are rather rarer than male deities in Egypt: Ptah, Khnum, Osiris, Shu, Atum, Amun, Ra vs. Neith and maybe Hathor.

At the heart of the temple of Isis at Philae exists a sanctuary shrouded in darkness – the Holy of Holies. Here resided a statue of Isis and each day the goddess appeared in the sanctuary to imbue the statue with her divine presence. The priests of the temple, acting as a proxy for the sovereign, performed daily sacred rites – singing hymns and making sacrifices – to the divine image. The daily propitiations were inscribed on the walls of the sanctuary, both the texts of the hymns and representations of the king making offerings to Isis on her throne.

The inscribed hymns and offering images provide insight into the ritual performance and theology of the temple of Isis at Philae, the most important Ptolemaic cult site of Isis, the patron goddess of Ptolemaic kingship.⁵⁸ From the hymns, we learn that Isis is “the Great One, God’s mother, Lady of Heaven, Mistress and Queen of the Gods” (Hymn I), “the Lady of Heaven, Earth, and the Netherworld, having brought them into existence through what her heart conceived and her hands created” (Hymn IV), and “the female Horus...who took possession of the Two Lands, ruler of gods and goddesses...great massacre against her Enemy” (Hymn V).⁵⁹

Although a supreme creator goddess and ruler of all realms, Isis still focuses her power and attention on her family, in securing and supporting her son Horus’ kingship (Hymn I) and as the protector of deceased brother-husband Osiris (Hymn II). In the hymns and associated legends, Ptolemy II, who founded the temple, is called Horus, the son of Isis, and through this association, the hymns also become about granting and protecting Ptolemaic kingship. In the legend of Hymn II—an inscription that accompanies the iconography associated with the hymn and clarifies the purpose of the hymn, Isis says to Ptolemy II: “I have given you the kingship of Atum on earth; I have given you the land with what is in it,” and in the legend of Hymn VIII, Isis

⁵⁸ The hymns and associated inscriptions are discussed in Žabkar (1988). A new edition and translation of Hymns I and II are presented in Klotz (2014-2015).

⁵⁹ Žabkar (1988) 22, 51, 58.

says to him: “I have given you all flat lands and all foreign lands; I have given you the kingship of Ra in heaven.”⁶⁰

Not only is Isis presented as a universal goddess in the hymns, but she is also placed in her local context as “Lady of Philae, Mistress of Biggeh” and the “Mistress of Abaton.”⁶¹ Her local character particularly highlights her relationship with her brother husband Osiris-Onnophris, who rejuvenates himself on Biggeh Island (also called Senmet (*snmwt*) and the Abaton (“untrodden”), his earthly resting place. Thus, in Hymns II and IV, Isis is said to be with Osiris at Biggeh as he rejuvenates himself. Hymn VI describes great festivals and feasts with rich offerings for Isis at Biggeh. In Hymn VII, Isis is called “Great of manifestations in Biggeh,” as well as the “Lady of the Sacred Mound, Mistress of Philae.”⁶²

Her most prominent local characterization comes through in Hymn IV: her role in the Nile inundation. Hymn IV is located on the bottom register on the back (north) wall of the sanctuary parallel to Hymn III. Both hymns highlight her role as a beneficent nature goddess. In Hymn III, this aspect of her character is presented universally, she is “lady and desire of the green fields” and “rain-cloud that makes green the fields when it descends.”⁶³ It is a climactic certainty that Isis the “rain-cloud” is a feature of her universal character and not her local one, since the cataract region is an arid desert, receiving less than one millimeter of rainfall per year in the modern day. Any vivification of the land from the First Cataract would be from the inundation, or the annual flooding, of the Nile, the subject of Hymn IV.

Hymn IV starts by associating Isis with the goddess Satis:

⁶⁰ Žabkar (1988) 31, 120.

⁶¹ Žabkar (1988) 31, 22.

⁶² Žabkar (1988) 107.

⁶³ Žabkar (1988) 42.

Isis, giver of life, residing in the Sacred Mound, Satis, Lady of Biggeh:
She is the one who pours out the Inundation
That makes all people live and green plants grow,
Who provides divine offerings for the gods,
And invocation-offerings for the Transfigured Ones.⁶⁴

Although the other hymns do not mention Satis explicitly, she and Isis share many of the same attributes. This can be seen in similar temple inscriptions concerning each goddesses. For instance, in the legend of Hymn IV in the Temple of Isis at Philae, Isis says to Ptolemy II, “I have given you all flat lands and all foreign lands,” and in Hymn III, Isis says to Ptolemy II: “I instill the fear of you throughout the land; I have given you all the lands in peace; I instill the fear of you among the foreign countries.”⁶⁵ This imperial martial quality is shared with Satis. For example, at the New Kingdom Beit El-Wali Temple of Ramses II in the Nubian borderlands, Satis says to Ramses II: “I have given thee all plains and every hill-country [under] thy sandal[s], the fear of thee being in the heart(s).”⁶⁶ Moreover, both goddesses are called the Eye of Re, Lady of Heaven, and are shown as the mother of the king.⁶⁷

As the consort of Khnum, the god of the cataract and the inundation, Satis was associated with the Nile and its inundation. Her name suggests the same, since it is derived from *sti*, meaning “to shoot, to eject, to pour out, to throw.”⁶⁸ Thus, she is the one who pours out the water. This association is clear in Hymn IV: *Nts sti H'py* (“She is the one who pours out the Inundation”). This shows that early in the Ptolemaic period, Isis and Satis were jointly affiliated with the Nile inundation. Even though this hymn does not explicitly mention Sothis, their shared relationship was likely related to their shared association with Sothis (Sopdet), the star who

⁶⁴ Translation Žabkar (1988) 51.

⁶⁵ Žabkar (1988) 42, 51

⁶⁶ Valbelle (1981) 35.

⁶⁷ cf. Valbelle (1981) 35, 37.

⁶⁸ Budge (2013) 55.

announces the inundation. This becomes very prominent elsewhere in Philae and in Aswan, as discussed in the next chapter. Isis' and Satis' shared role led to the life, prosperity, and fertility of the people and land of Egypt. Through this fertility, the offerings for the deities of Egypt were produced to ensure the proper functioning of the temples and the state. In Philae and the rest of Egypt, both goddesses will continue to be closely aligned with the inundation.

In the second stanza of Hymn IV, Osiris himself is “the pure water, rejuvenating himself at Biggeh at his time.” In a hymn inscribed on the wall of the central portal of the second pylon of the temple, Osiris is called Hapy (the Nile inundation), the source of the pure water. Plutarch states: “But the wiser of the priests call not only the Nile Osiris and the sea Typhon, but they simply give the name of Osiris to the whole source and faculty creative of moisture, believing this to be the cause of generation and the substance of life-producing seed.”⁶⁹ More specifically, as discussed above, the Nile was considered the efflux of Osiris, the liquid that seeped out of his mummified corpse.⁷⁰ Thus, a hieroglyphic inscription on the outside wall of the Isis temple at Philae states: “Osiris, great god, master of Philae, who causes the flood to flow as his perspiration.”⁷¹

The final stanza of Hymn IV is the most succinct display of Isis' universal and creative powers in the hymns of the sanctuary: “She is the Lady of Heaven, Earth, and the Netherworld, having brought them into existence through what her heart conceived and her hands created.”

⁶⁹ Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, 33.1.

⁷⁰ Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, 38.1.

⁷¹ PM VI 246; Valbelle (1981) 57; Oestigaard (2011) 45; Frankfort (1948) 191. This aspect of Osiris is particularly present in the Pyramid Texts: Pyr. 788: “You have your water, you have your flood, the fluid which issued from the god, the exudation which issued from Osiris...”; Pyramid Text 1360: “Raise yourself, O spirit of this King! Your water is yours; your flood is yours, your efflux which issued from the putrefaction of Osiris is yours; Pyramid Text 2031: “You have your water, you have your efflux, you have your flood which issued from Osiris.”

Thus, the hymn links her role in pouring out the inundation with the act of creation. Such phrases, especially the mention of her hands in the act of creation, associate Isis to other creator gods, such as Ptah-Tanenen and Khnum, especially given her role in the inundation.⁷²

According to Žabkar, Hymn IV seems to be a choral hymn. The first line, which is in the second person, is an antiphon for the rest of the hymn, which is in the third person. The hymn would have been sung by the officiating priest, who represented the king in his absence, together with a chorus of his assistants.⁷³ The other hymns on the wall were likely sung by the officiating priest alone with a refrain from the chorus of assistants. Having all the participants sing in unison was a break in form, which suggests that this hymn was “the highest point of the eulogy of Isis.”⁷⁴ This supposition coincides with the text that culminates in Isis’ most supreme form as creator of the heavens, earth, and underworld. Thus, the celebration of the Nile inundation in its relation to universal, creative power was likely the central feature in the daily ritual and the primary function of the temple.

Hymn IV is inscribed in the middle of an offering scene between Ptolemy II, who pours water from a jar on the left, and Isis, who receives the offering and hymn on the right. A border inscription behind Ptolemy II reads: “The Son of Re, Ptolemy has come before you, O Isis, bringing to you this pure water, which comes forth from Biggeh, and which gives life forever.”⁷⁵

⁷² Žabkar (1988) 53. As mentioned above in Chapter 3.2, Khnum is consistently associated with Ptah-Tanenen in his creative power. For instance, in the *Famine Stele*, l. 20, Khnum is named as “Tanenen, the father of the gods,” in part because of his control over the Nile inundation. The “Great Hymn of Khnum” from the Greco-Roman Period says about Khnum: “You are Ptah-Tanenen, creator of creators.” Lichtheim (2006) 113, 115. Simpson (2003) 386-391.

⁷³ Žabkar (1988) 52.

⁷⁴ Žabkar (1988) 52.

⁷⁵ Žabkar (1988) 47.

Thus, Ptolemy II makes an offering of the pure water, which is the efflux of her brother-husband Osiris, to celebrate Isis' pouring out of the inundation.

Even from the earliest extant texts of the Philae cult, Isis is related to Satis. Moreover, the inundation provides the creative power for Isis' rule over all realms and ultimately the king's royal power and legitimacy. Isis' power and Ptolemaic kingship are anchored in the First Cataract and the Nile inundation, as explored further in the next chapter.

3.2 Double Deities at the Temples of Isis at Philae and Aswan

Syncretism and associations did not only occur along the gender binary. In this case study, I explore the shared roles and identifications of the goddess Isis and the god Khnum across the gender binary, as deities who were both creator and inundation deities. In fact, their association and the gendered dualities of their identity argue against the primacy of the gender binary in Ptolemaic Egyptian religion. While Isis is certainly associated with Satis-Sothis and Khnum is at times associated with Osiris, Isis and Khnum are also associated with each other, possibly in a process of monadic unity and conglomeration of the complex polytheism of Egyptian religion into a restricted polytheism or even a complex monotheism centered around Isis.

The architectural and decorative program of Egyptian temples often reflect spiritual and ritual elements of the cult practiced at the site. This can be reflected in geographic alignment, adornment of rulers and deities, types of offerings, placement of deities. The term used for this phenomenon is *grammaire du temple*.⁷⁶ For example, on the lintel of the central doorway of the

⁷⁶ Derchain (1962) coined the term *grammaire du temple*, which “refers to the close relation between the texts and their location within the temple. The location of a text could determine the choice of words, spelling, iconographic variation in the signs and even the grammatical constructions employed in the text” (Kaper, 2020, 1146). The idea extends beyond linguistic grammar and is used to understand the underlying “grammar” of temples and their decoration

Temple of Isis at Aswan, the king wears the red *deshret* crown of Lower Egypt (northern Egypt) on the north side of the lintel and the white *hedjet* crown of Upper Egypt (southern Egypt) on the south side of the lintel. Furthermore, as discussed above, on the lower register of the sanctuary doorway of the same temple, the Nile figures associated with the north were placed on the northern doorjamb, and the Nile figures associated with the south were placed on the southern doorjamb.

As seen in the Aswan example above, the lintel of the central doorway of the temple, which features a double scene of the Osirian triad and the Khnum triad, is a site of revealing *grammaire du temple*, especially when considering the principal deities of the temple as indicated in the main sanctuary inscriptions. In the Temples of Isis at Philae, the lintels of nearly all the doorways, except those in the inner sanctuary, are shared between Isis and Khnum.⁷⁷ Even the oldest lintel decorations (the gate of Nectanebo II and the gate of Ptolemy II Philadelphus) feature double deities in their *grammaire du temple*.

At Philae, at least seventeen of the doorways of the temple feature a double scene with Isis and Khnum. Most of these representations come from the period of extensive building and decorating under Ptolemy VI and VIII, but one of the earliest representations at Philae show that Khnum was always a featured deity at Philae. Dating to the pre-Ptolemaic period, the lintel of the

including inscriptions, architecture, and iconography. See also, Winter (1987); Kurth (1998) 52-64; Minas-Nerpel (2012) 364.

⁷⁷ While Khnum does not feature on the doorways of the central temple, he does appear on the walls of the temple. He receives an offering in Room C with Satis and Anukis; on the top register of Room VII, he receives an offering of fresh plants with Satis and Anukis (PM VI 331-335); and in the main sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, Khnum receives ma'at with Satis. In the last scene, Ptolemy II is called Khnum's son, born of Satis, and fed by Anukis (PM VI, p. 243; Valbelle (1981) 56. Anukis does appear on the lintel of a doorway in the temple (lintel of west door of chamber VII leading into Room XI (Gutbub, 1985, 135). Here she appears in opposition to Satis, who appear on the outer west wall of Room XII.

outer doorway of the Gate of Nectanebo features a double scene of a king running to Osiris-Onnophris and Isis in the central left frieze and running to Khnum and Hathor in the central right frieze.⁷⁸

While Khnum occasionally appears with one or both Cataract goddesses on doorways at Philae, he is most often accompanied by Hathor. Since the pairing of Khnum and Hathor features on the Gate of Nectanebo I, it can be assumed that Khnum and Hathor featured heavily in the theology of the island in the 30th dynasty.⁷⁹ It is unclear exactly how Hathor's presence should be understood. She is called "the mistress of Biggeh," while Isis is called "the mistress of the Abaton and lady of Philae." Hathor had a temple on Biggeh, so possibly her presence on Philae and her association with Khnum is based on her relationship to the island. She also features prominently in the myth of the Distant Goddess (discussed in Chapter 3 as the Myth of the Sun's Eye), to which both Satis and Anukis are also associated, so possibly Khnum is present based on this association. Hathor's association with that myth featured prominently in the theology of her temple on Philae, built by Ptolemy VI and expanded by Ptolemy VIII. The myth is, among other things, an allegory of the inundation returning each year after a winter spent away from Egypt. That Khnum and Hathor are most often presented with water libations in *kbh.w* or *hnm* vases suggests a close relationship with the inundation.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ The west face of the Gate of Ptolemy II Philadelphus shows a parallel, likely purposeful, although the orientation is flipped: the king runs with vases to Khnum and Hathor in the central left frieze and runs with oars to Osiris-Onnophris and Isis on the central right frieze. Again, this early depiction shows Isis and Khnum with their consorts sharing the central position on the lintel.


⁷⁹ Martzloff (2011) 93.

⁸⁰ While the *kbh.w* vase can be used for generic liquid libations, it is more specifically used to make water libations, especially from the purifying Cataract waters. In fact, the word *kbh.w* is also the Egyptian word used for the Cataract. In the lintel frieze of the main doorway of the Temple of Isis at Aswan, Khnum's epithet "Lord of the Cataract" (*nb kbh.w*) is represented by the *nb* sign, the *kbh.w* vase, and the *mw* sign (𓄠𓄢𓄣) (Bresciani and Pernigotti, 1978, 44-45,





Moreover, Khnum and Hathor both have responsibilities in the mythology of the birth of Horus, as featured in the *mammisi*, or the birth house of the temple. Here, Hathor is shown breastfeeding Horus, for which role she is called “the benevolent nurse of the chamber.” She, as mistress of Biggeh, also receives the newly born Horus with the god Amun as her consort. Khnum is featured prominently in the *mammisi* in his role as creator god, who fashions humans and gods on his potter’s wheel. He receives the orders to create the infant Horus from Amun, and he sets to work on his wheel, a scene in both the interior (Room II) and the exterior of the *mammisi*. Khnum, with his consort Heqet, the frog-headed goddess, also accompanies Isis to the place of birth. The couple also escorts the king, associated with the Horus child, to the place of birth.

While Isis is called the “mistress of the Abaton,” which highlights her role in protecting and revivifying her brother-husband Osiris, Khnum and Hathor’s role was related more to the joint association with the inundation of the Nile at Biggeh. In this identification, Hathor becomes a proxy for Satis, who is featured prominently at the temple on Biggeh island. However, considering the importance of the birth of Horus for the temple of Philae, Hathor was chosen to represent the consort of Khnum. Thus, the pair represented an aspect of the Isis and Osiris theology related specifically to the inundation of the Nile and the creation of the Horus child, which emphasized his identity as a primordial creator god through his relationship with the Nile.

To illustrate this, I take the lintels of the north and south doorways of the 2nd Pylon of Philae. In the south (outer) face, the king is shown running with the *kbh* vase towards Khnum

B.3). The *hnm* is another vase. It is a pun on Khnum’s name (transliteration as Hnmw), which is typically represented in hieroglyphs with an image of the *hnm* vase and a standing ram with vertical horns () which may represent his role as creator on the potter’s wheel (See Martzloff, 2011, 160-161).

and Hathor.⁸¹ As discussed above, not only is the *kbh* a libation vessel, but it is also the hieroglyphic representation of the Cataract. It is used as a vessel of the cataract's own pure water, which is given as a ritual activation (*do ut des*) of the inundation of the Nile. So, although the texts do not explicitly mention the inundation, the relief represents Khnum's power over the flood, which in this case is centered around his and Hathor's identity of lord and mistress of Biggeh. The text of the passage, however, takes on the primordial aspect of Khnum. Here, he is referred to as the father of the gods and goddesses, the one who was first created with Ra. With reference to the *mammisi* texts and reliefs, his primordial creative powers are specifically harnessed at Philae for the creation of Horus on his potter's wheel. The connection between the inundation and creative primordial powers is not arbitrary. The rich Nile silt that fertilizes the ground is brought to Egypt through the inundation. Khnum uses this same silt as the clay on his wheel. Thus, all the gods and goddesses, as well as the mortals of Egypt, are created from the silt brought forth by the inundation of the Nile, and themselves embody the richness and fertility of the land.

On the north (inner) face of the pylon, the deities' role in the inundation of the Nile is even more explicitly referenced and combined with their creative, primordial powers.⁸² Isis, who on the south face, was vested with a cartouche as the universal queen of the gods, a rarity for a goddess, is on the north face given a unique variation of her epithet *di'nh* ("gives life"). This variation adds the *mw* or water sign () as a determinative, qualifying the epithet to mean specifically "gives life through the inundation" (  ) , referencing her role in bringing forth the

⁸¹ See Martzloff (2011) 157.

⁸² See Martzloff (2011) 160-161.

Nile flood.⁸³ On the other side of the lintel, the king presents a *hnm* vase to Khnum and Hathor. This is a pun on Khnum's name (transliteration as *Hnmw*), which is typically represented in hieroglyphs with an image of the *hnm* vase and a standing ram with vertical horns (𓆎𓆏), which may represent his role as creator on the potter's wheel. In the text, Khnum is described as the guardian of Biggeh and the god of Elephantine who brings out the inundation, and so is qualified as "the great Nun, who leads the flood."⁸⁴ In the vertical marginal column, Khnum's primordial identity is further described, "the god from the beginning, the great Nun who does all things, and who rests in the Abaton." The Nun, as described above, is the primordial waters of eternal creative potential, which make up the inundation. Typically, Osiris rests in the Abaton, but here, Khnum as Nun rests in the Abaton, linking Osiris to the inundation through Khnum.

This expression connects Khnum's role as a universal creator god with his role in the inundation of the Nile. As discussed in the previous case studies, Isis is also functioning as a creator goddess in relation to the Nile inundation. For instance, she takes on Ptah-Tatenen's creative powers, by which she brought into existence herself, Osiris, Horus, the inundation, Heaven, the Underworld, and the earth "through what her heart conceived and her hands created."⁸⁵ In Hymn VII, she is "the Mighty One in the Mansion of the sacred benben stone," the very site of creation.⁸⁶ In Hymn VIII, she is said to have given "birth to all the gods."⁸⁷

Throughout the hymns, Isis is associated with the sun god Ra, both as the Eye of Ra and as Ra himself. Thus, in Hymn VI, Isis is "the one who rises and dispels darkness, shining when

⁸³ Martzloff (2011) 160 suggests "*qui donne la vie*" would mean "*qui apporte l'inondation*" with the addition of the *mw* sign.

⁸⁴ Martzloff (2011) 160.

⁸⁵ Žabkar (1988) 51: Hymn IV.

⁸⁶ Žabkar (1988) 107: Hymn VII.

⁸⁷ Žabkar (1988) 119: Hymn VIII.

traversing the primeval ocean (Nun), the Brilliant One in the (celestial) waters.”⁸⁸ Khnum is often referred to as Khnum-Ra in the Cataract region. In a hymn from a destroyed temple on Elephantine, Khnum-Ra is the “glorious child who shines in the Nun and illuminates both the countries with its rays.”⁸⁹ At this same temple, Khnum seems to have been celebrated as an amalgam of two entities: the reincarnated Osiris as a solar child and the Horus-child, In this role, Khnum acts as the protector of Osiris dead body.⁹⁰ So at Elephantine, Khnum both leads out the inundation and protects the dead body of Osiris, the very activities of Isis at Philae and the Abaton.

In the process of amalgamating the Cataract Triad and the Philean Triad, the boundaries between Isis and Khnum slipped with both having taken on some of the roles and identities of the other. This is related to their roles as creator gods associated with the Nile inundation, which generates elements of gender-duality in their identity. While Khnum has long been a universal creator god, though not always at the First Cataract, this is an important shift in the character of Isis and has fundamental repercussions for Ptolemaic kingship and queenship. Isis is not only a goddess important for her family relations but is in her own right a generative force able to modulate royal and creative power through all the realms of the world, a power she has through her association with Khnum and the inundation of the Nile.

4. Conclusion

The close relationship between the temples of the First cataract, Isis, the inundation, and Egyptian sovereignty provided an ideological framework that promoted gendered dualities and gender fluidity in a way that transcended the norms of both pharaonic, Macedonian, and other

⁸⁸ Žabkar (1988) 80-81: Hymn VI.

⁸⁹ Laskowska-Kusztal (1996) 23.

⁹⁰ Laskowska-Kusztal (1996) 21-25.

Hellenic forms of kingship or monarchical sovereignty. The autochthonous inundation mythologies as modulated in the Temples of Isis at Philae and Aswan in the First Cataract was a prominent part of the foundation of dual-sovereignty, brother-sister marriage, and the emphasis on gender complementarity of Ptolemaic kingship and queenship.

Isis' role with the inundation became an ever more prominent feature of her cult in the Greco-Roman period, even outside of Egypt, and to inundations beyond the Nile. For example, in the Oxyrhynchus Hymn to Isis, Isis "bring[s] the flood of rivers..., and in Egypt the Nile, in Tripolis the Eleutherus, in India the Ganges."⁹¹ A late Ptolemaic hymn inscribed on the temple at Medinet Madi in the Fayum, a frontier area outside of the traditional flood zone of the Nile, characterizes Isis as both a creator and an inundation goddess. She is the "creator of both earth and the starry heaven, and of all rivers, and very swift streams," and she, "persuading the gold-flowing Nile, lead[s] it in season / over the land of Egypt as a blessing for men."⁹² In the cultic practices and associated figurines related to Isis worship on the Aegean island of Delos, the inundation of the Nile featured prominently.⁹³ While Isis had been associated with the Nile inundation in the pharaonic period, her relationship to the life-giving flood was vastly expanded and transformed to highlight her universality and her creative potential in the Ptolemaic period at the First Cataract temples, where her first national temple was developed and her universal cult was expanded. The localized, autochthonous inundation mythologies in the southern border became an important feature of Isis' universal worship as she continued to spread throughout the

⁹¹ *P.Oxy.* XI 1380. Grenfell and Hunt (1915).

⁹² Isidorus Hymn #2; Vanderlip (1972). Bernand, *Inscr.Métr.* 175.

⁹³ See Barrett (2011).

Mediterranean as well as Nubia, a feature of Ptolemaic ideological imperialism that influenced and continues to influence religious practice throughout the Mediterranean and the world.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Here, I refer to the influence of Isis on the prominence and spread of the Christian cult of the Virgin Mary, see especially *lactans* iconography and water rituals. (Higgins 2012, Borgeaud 2004, et al.)

CHAPTER 2: THE KING AND THE CATARACT: ECOLOGICAL CRISIS AND THE FIRST CATARACT BORDER

1. Introduction

Borders are both sites and symbols of hegemonic power, whether in their physical construction or in the social imaginary. Moreover, they can become anchoring sites for the construction of the political leader(s) as protector and provider of the state. When the hegemonic power is threatened, whether through ecological crisis, political upheaval, military action, or global pandemic, the border is strengthened as a site of power construction and becomes part of the ideological response during and after crises. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, GOP leaders have focused political attention on the border as an epicenter for disease spread, calling for even stronger border regulations while simultaneously blocking mask mandates and denying the efficacy of vaccines.¹ The message is clear, a stronger border policy will keep Americans safe and the body politic healthy.

One of the early crises of the Ptolemaic regime was the inundation crisis of the mid-240s BCE, which caused a famine and revolt. The crisis threatened Ptolemaic rule and required a broad-spectrum response from the Ptolemaic rulers, including the return of King Ptolemy III to Egypt from the foreign battlefield, the shipment of expensive grain relief, and the remission of taxes. In this chapter, I explore an additional element of Ptolemy III's response to the crisis that centers on the ecotheologies of the inundation, particularly in the Temple of Isis at Aswan in the First Cataract border region. The inundation waters, which flowed from the First Cataract,

¹ Donald Trump and Texas governor Greg Abbott lead the way in calling for a strong border to cure the sick body politic. Charles Sykes, *Politico*, Aug. 7, 2021, "Opinion | Who Trump Thinks is Really to Blame for the Covid Surge." A similar response followed the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

provided the physical and conceptual southern border of Egypt. Thus, by focusing on ecotheologies of inundation at the border, Ptolemy III was strengthening his relationship with both the life-giving ecological cycles of the Nile and the border, which had long lasting effects on Ptolemaic kingship.

Controlling the Nile inundation had high stakes for Egypt's sovereigns, including and especially the Ptolemaic rulers, who, in addition to the typical travails of absolute sovereignty, had to establish and maintain their rule as foreign colonizers. In this chapter, I show the ways in which the Ptolemaic sovereigns cultivated the Nile inundation as localized in the First Cataract border region as a tool and symbol of colonial and imperial power. Furthermore, I show one of the processes in which the Ptolemaic kings invented themselves as inundation kings, a feature of pharaonic Egyptian kingship, and adopted forms of Egyptian masculinities, namely the ecomasculine.²

² I use the term “ecomasculine” for the praxis of ecomasculinity, which is a “discourse concerned with how masculinities and ecologies interact,” specifically seeking to “uncover and examine more positive constructions of masculinity” (Addis, 2020, 42). I use the term to refer to a form of masculinity counter to hegemonic masculinity with its role in the patriarchal control of women and nature simultaneously, as understood in the field of ecofeminism. The foundational definition of ecofeminism is “that the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, gender, class, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature” (Gaard, 2019, 1). See Section 2.3 in the Introduction for a fuller explanation of Ecofeminism. The perception of nature is, of course, culturally dependent. The increase in the Ptolemaic kings’ embeddedness in the natural world of Egypt mirrors the increase in the Ptolemaic kings’ embeddedness in the religion, culture, society, etc. of Egypt.

2. Ptolemy III and the Inundation Crisis of the mid-240s BCE

The Nile inundation served as a barometer for the sovereigns' rule.³ When the flood was high (but not too high), the king's reign was praised.⁴ When the Nile flood was too low, the king was blamed, and it was his duty to bring back the natural order through the preservation of *ma'at* (truth, order, justice).⁵ For instance, Seneca presents the absent flood during the reign of Cleopatra VII as a "sign of the loss of power for the two rulers of the world, for the empire of

³ The inundation of the Nile was measured and recorded throughout Egypt and especially in the Cataract region. The ideal measurement of the Nile inundation, as recorded in the *Famine Stele*, is 28 cubits (*Famine Stele* 8; Goedicke, 1989, 71 and n. 100. cf. Schlott-Schwab, 1981, 85). Plutarch *Isis and Osiris* 43 says: "the greatest [rise], at Elephantine, amounts to 28 cubits...but that at Mendes, the smallest, is 6 cubits, while at Memphis the intermediate, when it is normal, is 14 cubits. For Nilometers, see Bonneau (1971) 22-39.

⁴ For instance, in the Stele of Taharqo, a Nubian Pharaoh of Egypt, on the high Nile in Year 6 from Kawa (*FHN I 22*) from cc. 685 BCE, the high Nile is directly correlated to pharaoh's actions: "Now His Majesty is one who loves god, (2) so that he spends his time by day and lies by night seeking what is of benefit for the gods, (re)building [their] temples if they have fallen into decay, "giving birth" to their statues as on the first occasion, building their storehouses, endowing (3) their altars, presenting to them endowments of every kind, making their offering-tables of fine gold, silver, and copper. Well, then, because His Majesty's heart is satisfied by doing for them what is beneficial every day. This land has been overflowed (with abundance) (4) in his time...When the time for the rising (7) of the Inundation came, it continued rising greatly each day and it passed many days rising at the rate of one cubit every day. It penetrated the hills of South-land, it overtopped the mounds of North-land, and the land was (again) Primeval Waters, an inert (expanse), without land being (8) distinguishable from river. It rose to a height of 21 cubits, one palm, and 2½ digits at the harbor of Dominion (Thebes). His Majesty had the annals of the ancestors brought to him, to see the inundation(s) that happened in their time(s), and the like thereof was not found therein." (*FHN I 22*. transl. Richard Holton Pierce).

⁵ Oestigaard (2011) 65. Cf. *The Oracle of the Potter* (c. 129 or 115 BCE), which states that the Nile will not have water during the bad times and the military will have to march instead of sail. When the future savior king comes, "at the end of the evils, all that withered will be watered and blossom; the acacia that lost its leaves will bear new ones; the Nile that had no water will come with the flood." (Thompson and Koenen, 1984, 124).

Antony and Cleopatra did fall.”⁶ The Nile was also said to be responsive specifically to bad deeds of the kings, such as the murder of Pompey the Great in 48 BCE.⁷

Insufficient Nile floods, especially those that lasted over successive years had disastrous consequences for the Egyptian population, the infrastructure of the state, and the king. Poor floods could result in famine. Such a famine is described in the *Famine Stele*, a Ptolemaic text inscribed on a native rock of Sehel Island in the First Cataract, which purports to date from the Old Kingdom.

My [King Djoser’s] heart was extremely sad since the Inundation had not come on time for a period of seven years. Grain was scarce, the kernels dried out, everything edible in short supply...The child was in tears, the youth astray, and the elderly – their hearts miserable, their legs drawn together, squatting on the ground with their arms held inward. The courtiers were in ruin, the temples sealed up, the chapels dusty, everything found wanting.⁸

⁶ Seneca, *Natural Questions*, IVA.2.16. The Nile did not flood in both 42 and 41 BCE, the year of the Battle of Pharsalus. As discussed below, the lack of flood contributed to a devastating famine and along with other problems, likely contributing to the ultimate downfall of the Ptolemaic empire. There were both national efforts (deduced from Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2.60: “...she [Cleopatra VII] did not distribute grain rations to the Judeans at a time of famine,” suggesting she did distribute grain rations to the non-Judean population) and local efforts (cf. Kallimachos decree, *OGIS* 194) to counteract the lack of flood and ensuing famine.

⁷ Pliny, *Natural History*, 5.10.58. “The smallest rise [of the Nile] was that of five [cubits], in the year of the battle of Pharsalia [48 BCE], the river by this prodigy testifying its horror, as it were, at the murder of Pompeius Magnus.” The low flood of 48 BCE is not corroborated in other sources and may be a conflation with the low flood of 42-41 BCE. Whether it is historically reliable, it does show the trend for finding political explanations for the low flood and that the connection between the flood and proper government was accepted by the Greco-Romans as well as the Egyptians.

⁸ *Famine Stele*: Simpson (2003) 387; Brugsch (1891); Vandier (1936); Barguet (1953); Goedicke (1994); Hallo and Younger (2002); Quack (1997) 297-300; Casanova (1984); Haiying (1998); Gasse and Rondot (2007).

Similarly, a famine occurred in the reign of Cleopatra VII following a two-year insufficient inundation.⁹ The devastation of the famine is recorded in the Kallimachos Decree (*OGIS* 194) of March 39 BCE:

...the severe famine caused by a crop failure like none hitherto recorded...

...The famine, however, continued in the present year and became even worse and ... a failure of the flood and misery far worse than even before reigning throughout the whole [land] and the condition of the city being wholly critical...

Such famines had devastating consequences for the governance of the state. As the *Famine Stele* shows, starving people cannot pay their taxes: “Every man was so restrained by his taxation that they went inside so as not to go out,” which may refer to the tradition of Egyptians seeking tax asylum in the temples.¹⁰ Famine also led to revolts, which added additional stress to the tax system.¹¹ For instance, according to one papyrus (SB XXIV 1597), during the great revolt of the Egyptians (205—186 BCE),¹² “most of the farmers were killed” due to violence, and, as a result of the diminished population, the agricultural fields were not maintained, and thus “land

⁹ The poor flood is reported by Seneca (*Natural Questions*, IVA.2.16). The insufficient flood followed two volcanic eruptions in 46 BCE and 44 BCE, the latter of which was the third largest eruption in the past 2500 years (Manning et al., 2017, 6; Sigl et al., 2015, 543-549).

¹⁰ In Greek, this is called *anachoresis* (literally “withdrawal”). Hölbl (2001) 157 states that *anachoresis* occurred in Egypt since the late New Kingdom. It was the “flight of farmers from their villages.” The main cause “was excessive taxation and the intransigent manner in which it was executed.” The fugitive could disappear to another village or city or “even seek refuge in one of the sanctuaries that could grant the right of asylum.” See Lewis (1937); Lewis (1968); Morris (1978) 267-9; Lewis (1993); Link (1993); Lewis (1996) 64-6; McGing (1998) 172-174; Hölbl (2001) 157; Burstein (2004) 40-41.

¹¹ Manning et al. (2017) links major volcanic eruptions to “a suppression of Nile summer flooding” (pg. 1). The researchers found an increase in revolt onset frequency in the dates relative to volcanic eruption years, which implicates “volcanically induced Nile failure as an additional and hitherto little recognized potential catalyst for revolt against Ptolemaic rule” (pg. 5).

¹² McGing (1997); Vélisse (2004); Clarysse (2004); Manning and Ludlow (2016), et al.

[went] dry,” which caused tax collection difficulties.¹³ Beyond the tax implications, revolts were damaging to the economic and political stability of Egypt and threatened the sovereignty of the king.¹⁴

The response to revolt and inundation crisis reveals the priorities of the sovereign’s regime. These times of crisis also provided the king with opportunities for constructing new technologies of rule that reinforce, adapt, and entangle elements of kingship, which become important, for instance, in the development process of the unique Ptolemaic mixture of Hellenistic and Egyptian forms of rule. The relationship between revolt and inundation in Egypt added an ecological component to the king’s response to the inundation crises and ultimately to Ptolemaic kingship. Moreover, since the autochthonous inundation ecotheologies of Egypt (discussed in Introduction 1.5.2) locate the place of inundation at the First Cataract border, the region became an area of attention in the response to crisis. Furthermore, the relationship between inundation and border strengthened the ecological component of the Ptolemaic domestic and imperial projects.

The following case study explores Ptolemy III’s response to an inundation crisis and resulting revolt through a border and ecological lens. This case study suggests the process in which the Ptolemaic kings took on the role of inundation kings, an element of traditional Egyptian kingship, and a way in which they utilized their connection to nature and the gods to strengthen their colonial rule. Thus, while revolt and crisis are typically considered a threat to

¹³ transl. Clarysse (2004), Text 4, pg.4. *SB XXIV 15972*, Greek papyrus, Trinity College Dublin, *Pap. Gr.* 274. Moreover, survivors encroached on neighbors’ lands without registration and did not pay the taxes for the land or its cultivation.

¹⁴ McGing (1997); Véisse (2004); Clarysse (2004); Fischer-Bovet (2015); Manning and Ludlow (2016); Johstono (2016).

regimes of power, the successful response to this ecological crisis and revolt strengthened Ptolemaic sovereignty.

3. The Inundation Crisis

Ice-core samples from Greenland and Antarctica show volcanic eruptions in 247 BCE and 244 BCE, during the reign of Ptolemy III, which affected the Nile inundation during the mid-240s BCE.¹⁵ Along with heightened social tensions, the resulting low Nile flood was a catalyst for the revolt that started in 245 BCE¹⁶ and caused Ptolemy III to abandon his imperial campaign in the Near East, known as the 3rd Syrian War, and his attempt for global empire.¹⁷ For instance, Jerome states, “if he [Ptolemy III] had not been recalled to Egypt by disturbances at home, he would have made himself master of all Seleucus’ dominions.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Sigl, et al. (2015) 523, 543-9. Manning et al. (2017). The “suppression of Nile summer flooding” occurred “via the radiative and dynamical impacts of explosive volcanism on the African monsoon” (Manning et al., 2017, 1). This relationship was realized through the use of “climate model output, ice-core based volcanic forcing data, Nilometer measurements, and ancient Egyptian writings” (Manning et al., 2017, 1).

¹⁶ Little is said about this revolt in the ancient sources, though it is referenced in *P. Haun.* I 6; Jerome, *Epitome*, 27.1.19; Porphyry *FGrH* 260 F43. Scholars consider this the first native Egyptian revolt likely caused by socio-economic variables, such as tension between ethnic Egyptians and the Macedonians. Fischer-Bovet (2014) also suggests causes, such as “the absence of the king and his troops from Egypt, recruitment and confiscation that probably took place in preparation for the expedition, the major floods mentioned in the Canopus decree, and perhaps even the naval defeat at Andros” (65).

¹⁷ Manning et al. (2017) 6. The 3rd Syrian War was also called the Laodicean War, because it centered on a succession crisis upon the Seleucid king Antiochus III between Ptolemy III’s sister Berenike (and the wife of the late Seleucid king) and his former wife Laodice. In support of his sister and nephew, Ptolemy III set off for Syria. By the time Ptolemy III arrived in Syria, his sister and nephew had been assassinated. As a result, Ptolemy III declared war. Ptolemy III campaigned against Syria and marched into Mesopotamia, where we know from cuneiform evidence that he conquered Babylon (Appian, *Syriaca* 11.65 shows that Ptolemy III did participate in the capture of Babylon, which lasted from November 246 – March 245 (Kislimu and Addaru 66 SE (Babylonian)) according to the Ptolemy III chronicle recorded on a clay cuneiform table (BM 34428 = BCHP 11); (Bennett, “Ptolemy III,” *Egyptian Royal Genealogy*). See also *P.Haun.* I 6, which provides a fragmentary outline of the events.

¹⁸ Justin, *Epitome*, 27.1.19. On his way home, Ptolemy III is said to have either pillaged or levied tribute from the temples and treasuries of Asia for money (the sources claim somewhere between

Papyrological and epigraphic evidence confirms a problem with the inundation and threat of a famine around this time. For instance, the Canopus Decree (*OGIS* 56)¹⁹ relates that, at some point between 246 (the start of Ptolemy III's reign) and the stele's composition of March 4, 238:

The rise of the river [i.e., the Nile] was insufficient and all the inhabitants of the country were terrified at what had happened and remembered the disaster that occurred under some of the previous kings, under whom it happened that all the people living in the land suffered from a drought.

In a papyrus letter dated by paleography to the mid-3rd c. BCE, a soldier named Philotas writes to a Ptolemaic king about a machine that will help the crops grow, saying

Given that now and for a long time, the inundation has become insufficient... Since during the last 3 years, the river has not flooded, the dryness will produce a famine [...].²⁰

When Ptolemy III returned to Egypt, he not only needed to solve the crisis of the revolt and the famine but also to restore *ma'at* and harmony with the gods, since under Egyptian theologies of kingship, the inundation was responding to some insufficiency in his brief reign. The best evidence for Ptolemy III's response to the crisis is the trilingual Canopus Decree of 238 BCE (*OGIS* 56),²¹ in which Ptolemy III and his wife Berenike II are celebrated for:

- exercising provident care over those in the temples and the others inhabiting the country;

1,500 talents (*P. Gurob.* col. II, l.6) and 40,000 talents (Porphyry *FGrH* 260 F43) and cult objects and statues of the Egyptian gods taken from Egypt by Cambyses. Ptolemy I Soter was said to have done the same thing in the Satrap Stele, which may mean this is a trope of the returning king (Cairo. JdÉ 22182).

¹⁹ *OGIS* 56; Milne 5,22187; Onasch (1976) 137-155; Pfeiffer (2004).

²⁰ P. Edfu 8; Böhm (1955) 8; Bonneau (1971) 129; Lukaszewicz (1996) 94; (1999) 31-32. Though undated, the three-year drought mentioned in the text fits the context of the double eruption (in 247 and 244 BCE). “*Seule la crue de 245 av. n.è. a donné lieu à une décision de dégrèvement (P. Col. Zén. 87) dont nous ayons trace, c’est pourquoi, faute de certitude, je prospérerai cette date comme celle de la crue déficiente don’t parle la décret de Canope. Cet ensemble de circonstances: mauvaises crues, désordres, révolte, jutifie les préoccupations du roi et de la reine, πολλὰ προνοηθέντες.*” (Bonneau, 1971, 129).

²¹ See fn. 19.

- exercising much forethought and forgoing not a little of their revenues for the sake of the safety of the people;
- sending for grain for the country from Syria and Phoenicia and Cyprus and many other places at rather high prices they saved the inhabitants of Egypt;
- leaving behind an immortal benefaction and the greatest record of their virtue both for contemporaries and for future generations;

with the result that:

the gods have granted them their kingdom peacefully established and will give them all the other good things for all time.

The royal couples' response to the crisis, as reported in the Canopus Decree, was highly economic, with the focus on remitting taxes and importing grain, which relied on the dynamic Ptolemaic economic system and international, Hellenistic trade networks. While this gives the impression that Ptolemy III was not implementing pharaonic forms of kingship to the extent of his successors,²² other evidence shows Ptolemy III exhibiting traditional Egyptian modes of response to the insufficient flood and famine.

The first piece of evidence comes from the Canopus Decree itself. In the passage following the royal couple's specific response to the famine, the decree suggests theological deliberations around the calendar and the timing of the inundation of the Nile in the period following the crisis. Through the introduction of an additional epagomenal day every four years (functionally, a leap year) in honor of the royal couple, the decree shows an attempt to codify the union of the New Year's festival celebrating the start of the Nile flood and the great festival of the goddess Bastet, which, as explored in the next chapter, was a national holiday celebrating, in part, the inundation.²³ While the modification of the calendar was short-lived due to native

²² The epigraphic habit of the synodal decrees may show evidence of less "Egyptianization" in the kingship of Ptolemy III than his successors, especially after the battle of Raphia (217 BCE). Johnson (1995) 147-8; Austin (1981) 374; Bagnall and Derow (1981) no. 137, p. 226; Onasch (1976) 148.

²³ In 238 BCE, the two festivals happened to coincide on Pauni 1.

Egyptian priests' criticism,²⁴ the inscription memorialized the attempt to link a new festival celebrating the divine kingship of the reigning sovereigns Ptolemy III and Berenike II, which was a part of the Ptolemaic ruler cult innovations, to two inundation focused festivals, further associating the Ptolemaic regime with the inundation.

The second, explored in detail below, is the building and decoration activities of Ptolemy III at the Temple of Isis at Aswan in the First Cataract. Through an analysis of the texts, iconography, and assemblages of the temple, I show the king's focus on the Nile inundation following the period of crisis as well as the innovations made to link Ptolemaic kingship to the inundation, especially in the Cataract region.

4. The Temple of Isis at Aswan and the Inundation

There is evidence that Ptolemy III and Berenike II visited the First Cataract region in the period following the crisis,²⁵ likely between 245—243 BCE.²⁶ It is probable that during this visit, the royal couple commissioned and dedicated extensive building and decorative projects at both

²⁴ The calendar reform did not last a generation. An oath was added to the coronation practice following this reform that made the king swear not to add epagomenal days to the calendar: “neither to intercalate a month nor a day nor to change a festival, but to complete 365 days, as had been established by the ancients.” Nigidius Figulus in the 1st c. BCE. *De Sphaera* 98, ed. Swoboda, cf. Thompson and Koenen (1984) 125 and Thompson (2012) 136-137.

²⁵ Given the reference to peace in the *Alexandria Decree*, the revolt was likely over by its inscription date of 243 BCE (Greek text: BE_2013.472 + 475; el-Masry, *et al.* (2012); Agut-Labordère (2017) 152; Pfeiffer (2018); Burstein (2016) 77-86; Pfeiffer (2015) 65-70).

²⁶ A Greek dedicatory inscription on the Temple of Isis at Philae (OGIS 61) references this visit and helps to suggest a date. Bingen (1997 and 2007) argues convincingly that the inscription refers to a royal visit and not just a dedication using the evidence of syntax and the specificity of the vocabulary. The date is suggested by the mention of multiple royal children and the absence of the *Euergetai* epithet for the royal couple, which is first known from August/September 243 BCE (*PSI* IV 389; Huss (2001) 338, fn. 16. The epithet is not present in P. dem. Chicago (c. July 20 – August 18, 243 BCE). Since the epithet is absent from this inscription, it was most likely dedicated before September 243 BCE. The inscription also mentions “small children” (τεκνία) of Ptolemy III and Berenike II, suggesting that at least two children would have been born by the visit (Bingen, 1997 and 2007).

the Temple of Isis at Philae and the Temple of Isis at Aswan.²⁷ At Philae on the southern end of the Cataract, they dedicated a *mammisi*, or a birth house, a significant addition to the temple both architecturally and ideologically.²⁸ At Aswan on the northern end of the Cataract, they commissioned a temple to Isis and the decorations of its central doorway and inner sanctuary, which focus on inundation and the king's relationship to Isis and associated deities. Both projects construct in stone, text, and image the royal couple's focus on fertility and inundation following the inundation crisis of the mid-240s BCE.

The foundation of the Temple of Isis at Aswan,²⁹ in particular, was part of a larger Ptolemaic modulation of ancient theology and religious practice in response to the changing political landscape of Egypt, namely the increased power of Isis. The blueprint of this modulation already existed from at least Nectanebo II with the syncretism of the Isis triad and the Khnum triad at Philae, as explored in the previous chapter. However, the Aswan Isis temple did not blindly copy the ideology of Philae and in fact shows a remarkable responsiveness to

²⁷ The date of the visit of the royal couple does not necessarily coincide with the date of the building of the structures or the decorations, though it serves as a *terminus post quem* for the decorations. The infrastructure may have been commissioned under Ptolemy II and the decorations may have been completed later in the reign of Ptolemy III. The addition of Horus of Edfu throughout the temple decorations (Bresciani and Pernigotti (1978) pp. 43-61 (B.2-5, B.9, B.12) suggests that the temple decorations likely were not completed until after the commencement of construction of the temple of Horus at Edfu by Ptolemy III on August 23, 237 BCE.

²⁸ Because of the expansion of the *mammisi* under Ptolemy VIII, the exact nature of Ptolemy III and Berenike's II decoration of the *mammisi* are unknown. It is likely that the king and queen were represented leading a parade of fecundity figures on the walls of the *naos*. While only the fecundity figures remain extant, the context suggests the king and queen would have present in the scenes. (Junker 1965).

²⁹ Bresciani and Pernigotti (1978); Locher (1999) 81-82, 87-89; Stadler (2012); Laskowska-Kusztal (2007); Zaki (2008); Dijkstra (2009); Dijkstra and Cruz-Urbe (2012) General Introduction (pp. 11-29); Archaeological excavations have been completed in Aswan since the 1970s and the area around the Temple of Isis in 2000 by Schweizerisches Institut für ägyptischen Bauforschung und Altertumskunde and the Supreme Council of Egyptian Antiquities.

current events, suggesting that the theology of the temple and the region was not a static model from the pharaonic period blindly replicated by foreign colonizers. Moreover, the inundation crisis and ensuing revolt provided an opportunity for a dynamic response that incorporated ecotheological elements of Egyptian kingship, such as the king's crucial role in the "ecological triangle," into the more traditionally Hellenistic economic relief, which further enmeshed the Ptolemaic regime into the political, economic, religious, and environmental landscape of Egypt.

The Temple of Isis at Aswan is located on the east bank of the Nile across from Elephantine Island with its millennia-old temples of Khnum and Satis.³⁰ The layout is simple, with a north-west, south-east axis following the direction of the Nile (19x15x7m). The main features of the temple are the central doorway, the pillared hall, and three cells, of which only the central one (the inner sanctuary) has a decorated door. In the inner sanctuary, only the back wall is decorated with two registers: the lower register by Ptolemy III and the upper register by his descendent Ptolemy VIII.³¹ Ptolemy III also extensively decorated the central exterior doorway, with additional decorations contributed by his son Ptolemy IV.

The temple honors a unique iteration of Isis – Isis *ḥʿt pʿ mšʿ*, often translated as Isis "the head of the army."³² As a result of this epithet, the temple is often linked to the garrisoned troops stationed at Aswan in the Ptolemaic period and associated with a martial quality of Isis found in

³⁰ Today, the temple is located about half a kilometer from the banks of the Nile and approximately one kilometer from the Temple of Khnum on Elephantine. It is buried eight meters below the modern city of Aswan.

³¹ There are also three granite altars with cartouches of Ptolemy X.

³² See Bresciani and Pernigotti (1978); Žabkar (1988), Laskowska-Kusztal (2007); Zaki (2008). This epithet appears three times in the reliefs of Temple of Isis at Aswan. All instances appear on the front of the central doorway leading into the pillared hall and all date to the reign of Ptolemy III, though the epithet is found in graffiti in the temple likely dating to the reign of Ptolemy VIII. cf. Cruz-Urbe (2012) 124 (#203 DE 23, 1.4).

neighboring Philae.³³ In this case study, however, I propose an alternative interpretation for this epithet combining Isis' roles with the Nile inundation, protection of the borders of Egypt, and universal rulership.

Given their shared First Cataract and Ptolemaic *milieux*,³⁴ the Isis temple at Aswan has sometimes been considered a sort of satellite temple for the Isis temple at Philae.³⁵ With the primacy and the importance of the Philae temple in the region during the Ptolemaic period, it is easy to imagine the magnetism of the cult of Isis of Philae. Its influence can be seen in other regions of Egypt, such as the Fayum, and, especially, in Nubia.³⁶ As demonstrated by the decoration, theology, and epigraphy, however, the Temple of Isis at Aswan should be considered in the religious and administrative sphere of the college of priests of Elephantine.³⁷ Nevertheless, the Temple of Isis at Aswan was certainly influenced by and responding to the same Ptolemaic theological innovations as the Temple of Isis at Philae.³⁸ The Aswan temple also has a more pronounced focus on the inundation theology and the king's connection to the Nile flood than the

³³ See especially Žabkar (1988) 55-75.

³⁴ The Temple of Isis at Philae is approximately 7 km south of the Temple of Isis at Aswan.

³⁵ For instance, Arnold (1999) suggested that the temple of Aswan was a station of Isis' barque procession to and from Philae (150, 171-172). It is hard to imagine the barque procession of Isis travelling through the rough cataract waters.

³⁶ Baldi (2015), LeClant (1981); Hallof (2005); Hallof (2006). One of the most common epithets of Isis in Philae and Nubia is "Isis, mistress of Philae," which is not found in Aswan (Hallof, 2005, 42), suggesting an ideological border.

³⁷ For the decoration and theology, see Laskowska-Kusztal (2007); for the epigraphy, see discussions of *I.Th.Sy.244D* (Dietze, 1994, 183-184 and Piejko, 1992, 5-24). Laskowska-Kusztal's (2007) theological evidence is based on the close relationship between the Osirian triad (Osiris, Isis, Harpocrates) and the Cataract triad (Khnum, Satis, and Anukis) as well as the importance of the goddess Sothis, with whom Isis is assimilate and who appeared much earlier in Aswan than in Philae. In the decorations of the inner sanctuary of the Aswan temple, there is no mention of Philae or Biggeh, which contrasts with the frequent references to Elephantine and Aswan in the temple of Philae.

³⁸ Laskowska-Kusztal (2007) states that the importance of the Temple of Isis at Aswan was to be a "*contrepois à la puissance grandissante de Philae*" (57).

Philae temple decorations from the period of Ptolemy II, which is a consequence of an ecotheological response following the inundation crisis of the mid-240s BCE.³⁹ To demonstrate this, I explore the decorations and inscriptions in the inner sanctuary and doorways of the Aswan temple made under Ptolemy III and his son Ptolemy IV. In each part of the temple, there are forms of syncretism, adaptations, and doublings that utilize the gender dualities explored in the previous chapter to reinforce and connect this new temple with the autochthonous inundation mythologies of the First Cataract during a time of crisis.

4.1 The Inner Sanctuary

The inner sanctuary, or Holy of Holies, of the temple was decorated in two phases: 1) the lower register by Ptolemy III Euergetes; and 2) the upper register by his descendent Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II. The lower register has four friezes with two vertical hymns in the center of each, which are dedicated to two quartets of assimilated deities—an Osirian quartet (Osiris, Isis, Nephthys, and Horus) and a Cataract quartet (Khnum, Satis, Anukis, and Horsiesi). Below I describe the inundation-related contents of the register.

*Top left:*⁴⁰ Ptolemy III offers incense and a libation (a *kbh.w* vase, though it does not spout water) to Osiris, Isis, and Harpocrates. Osiris is called the lord of the Cataract, Khnum the lord of Nubia, and is said to “produce the flood in its time.” Isis says to the

³⁹ The influence between the Isis temples of Aswan and Philae are not unidirectional. Following the reign of Ptolemy III and the construction of the inundation-focused Aswan temple, the Philae temple was increasingly focused on the inundation. It is a mistake to assume that Philae held a religious, cultural, or power monopoly in the religious landscape of the First Cataract. A better model is peer polity interaction, which encompasses both competition (or competitive emulation) and the transmission of innovation (See Renfrew and Cherry 1986; Ma 2003). There is evidence for individuals holding religious and administrative roles in various temples in the First Cataract region, e.g., Petiesi, who is in the local military, serves in the temples of the Cataract and Nubia, and gives gifts to both Elephantine and Philae (Aswan Stele 1057); or Herodes of Pergamon, who was the commander of the garrison at Syene and a priest at both Elephantine and Philae (OGIS 111).

⁴⁰ Bresciani and Pernigotti (1978) F.13. Translations adapted from Bresciani and Pernigotti (1978).

king: “I gave you the fresh water that comes out of Elephantine” and “I gave you the flood from the two caves.”

*Bottom left:*⁴¹ Ptolemy III makes an offering to Khnum-Re, Satis-Isis, Anukis-Nephthys, and Horsiesi. Khnum-Ra is called the lord of the Cataract, the great god who lives in Elephantine, and is said to “bring the flood from the two caves to make humanity live.” Satis-Isis is the lady of Elephantine and is said to “produce the inundation of the two caves, to make each one live.” As a result of the king’s offering, Satis “concedes the flooding of the Nile in its time,” and Khnum and Anukis grant abundance of material wealth and nourishment.

*Bottom right:*⁴² Ptolemy III offers incense and fresh water (from a *kbh.w* vase) to Osiris-Onnophris, Isis-Satis, Nephthys-Anukis, and Horus of Edfu, Osiris is called the lord of the Cataract, preeminent in the province, lord of Aswan. Isis is called Isis-Satis and is the lady of Aswan. Nephthys is called Nephthys-Anukis and is the lady of Nubia. Horsiesi, Horus son of Isis, says to the king: “I gave you the water that comes out of the two caves.”

*Hymn to Khnum:*⁴³ “The father of the fathers, who gave birth to himself, who created existence at the beginning of time, Khnum, lord of the Cataract, great god, preeminent in Nubia, who brings out the Nile from the two caves.”

*Hymn to Osiris:*⁴⁴ “The king in the whole land, great prince, ruler of kings, Osiris, great god, lord of the Cataract, Onnophris justified, lord of Aswan.”

There are two major themes in these texts and images: 1) the inundation; and 2) the syncretism of the Osirian triad⁴⁵ and the Cataract triad. Osiris, Khnum, Isis, Satis, and Horus (as Horsiesi) are all involved directly with the flood, whether they are producing it, directing it, or giving it.⁴⁶ During the reign of Ptolemy III, these reliefs and texts would have constituted the

⁴¹ Bresciani and Pernigotti (1978) F.16.

⁴² Bresciani and Pernigotti (1978). F.17.

⁴³ Bresciani and Pernigotti (1978) F.18a.

⁴⁴ Bresciani and Pernigotti (1978) F.18b.

⁴⁵ In the previous chapter, I call this triad the Philean triad. I call it the Osirian triad (Osiris, Isis, Horus) for clarity since it is the Temple of Isis at Aswan.

⁴⁶ The only frieze that is not directly related to the flood (F.14) has very little detail. This may be because of the addition of Queen Berenike II in the scene. During the royal couple’s visit that likely saw the commissioning of this temple, Berenike II is believed to have been pregnant. That she is included in this frieze, which makes offerings of milk to three goddesses, one with baby in

primary inscriptions inside the sanctuary and the temple. This suggests that the theology of the temple was focused on the inundation and not necessarily on the martial quality of Isis, as is commonly suggested.⁴⁷

The second theme is the syncretism of the Osirian triad, which were the primary gods of Philae and were worshipped nationally, and the Cataract triad, which were worshipped locally in the First Cataract and especially Elephantine. In general, the deities perform the same functions and provide the same benefits to the king, for instance both Khnum and Osiris are called “great god” and “lord of the Cataract.” Since the triads were disparately gender differentiated, the triads are represented as quartets, adding a second goddess to the Osirian triad, Isis’ sister Nephthys to stand in the place of Anukis, and a god-child to the Cataract triad, Horsiesi (Horus-son-of-Isis) in the same role as Horus in the Osirian triad. Within the quartets, the deities are explicitly syncretized (“Isis-Satis, Nephthys-Anukis”). This shows a sincere attempt at syncretism but also the inherent tension in syncretizing these disparately gendered triads.⁴⁸ The transformation of both triads into quartets in the inner sanctuary suggests a purposeful and dynamic process of syncretism and association that shows great mythological attention and economic, political, and religious investment in the Ptolemaic period to the development of a unified and powerful autochthonous inundation mythology at the border region. Since the Ptolemaic regime was already closely associated with the Osirian triad (the king as Osiris and Horus; the queen as Isis),

arms, may suggest that the scene relates to her pregnancy or general fertility. Bingen (1997) and (2007).

⁴⁷ Bresciani and Pernigotti (1978); Žabkar (1988); Laskowska-Kusztal (2008); Zaki (2008).

⁴⁸ Ptolemy VIII’s contributions to the sanctuary are theologically more diverse, reflecting more of the deities found on the central doorway and, in general, is less focused on the inundation. The flood, however, is not absent from this register. In the central vertical hymn to Khnum, he is said to “produce the flow of the Nile from the two caves to make each one live” (F.9a).

the syncretism of the national and local deities may have been an attempt to further link the Ptolemies to local autochthonous ecotheologies of inundation.

4.2 The Sanctuary Doorway

Though it was decorated under Ptolemy III's son Ptolemy IV, the sanctuary doorway clarifies the temple's central inundation theme. The doorway is focused on the Osirian triad and does not present any offerings to the Cataract Triad. Nevertheless, the inundation does appear in the doorway in the form of Nile fecundity figures decorating the bottom register of the door jambs⁴⁹ and in a hymn to Isis as Sothis-Satis.

Fecundity figures are a common feature of Egyptian temples, especially on the lowest register of temple walls.⁵⁰ They are typically portrayed in a line carrying offerings to the gods, often representing the nomes of Egypt. One type of fecundity figure is the Nile in the form of Hapy. In this case, he typically carries two *kbh.w* vases. On the sanctuary doorjamb at Aswan, there are four Hapy figures. The two on the north doorjamb carry two *kbh.w* vases on an offering table while pouring out the vase closest to themselves. The two on the south doorjamb carry two *kbh.w* vases on an offering table while pouring out a third *kbh.w* vase. The identity of the figures coincides with the geography of the temple: the north doorjamb has Nile figures from the north and the south doorjamb has Nile figures from the south.

North Doorjamb:

1st Hapy (E.8a): The Northern Nile; (speaking to Isis): "I have come to you, O Isis lady of Aswan, and I have brought you the fresh water that comes out of the two caves."

2nd Hapy (E.8b): The Nile of the northern country; (speaking to Isis): "I have come to you, O Isis lady of Aswan, and have purified your abode with freshly gushed water."

⁴⁹ Fecundity figures with fresh water also appear in the southern exterior doorway also decorated under Ptolemy IV (C.8 and C.10).

⁵⁰ Baines (1985).

South Doorjamb:

1st Hapy (E.13a): The Southern Nile; (speaking to Isis): “I came to you, O Isis lady of Aswan, and I brought water for you.”

2nd Hapy (E.13b): The Nile of the southern country; (speaking to Isis): “I have come to you, O Isis lady of Aswan, and I have brought you what comes out of the two caves to purify your abode.”

While this is a typical decorative motif, they take on new meaning given importance and physical proximity of the two caves and the inundation water to the temple. The Nile figures act not only to ritually cleanse the sanctuary but also to focus the intentions of the other scenes on the doorjamb, which reflect activities and grants generic of Osiris, Isis, and Horus.

The theme of the flood is taken up in the inner passage of the doorway, which was adorned with two hymns to Isis. The hymn on the south jamb (E.15) is rather esoteric, celebrating Isis the “lady of thirteen, sovereign of sixteen, she accompanies the *hemeset* in number of 730; mistress of the years, ruler of the months and days, etc.” While Ptolemy II is said to have poured a libation of fresh water for Isis, there are no other mentions of the inundation in the hymn.

The hymn on the north jamb celebrates a syncretized Isis-Sothis, the goddess-star who leads out the flood,⁵¹ associating Isis “the great, Mother of God, Mistress of Syene” with “Sothis,

⁵¹ Sothis (or Sopdet in Egyptian) is the Egyptian goddess of the Sirius star, whose heliacal rising coincides with the inundation of the Nile. Sothis is seen to follow the constellation Orion, who was associated with Osiris, through the night’s sky. For this reason, Isis became associated with Sothis, who faithfully follows her brother, from the Old Kingdom. For instance, in the Pyramid Texts, “Your sister Isis comes to you [the deceased] rejoicing for love of you. You have placed her on your phallus and your seed issues into her, she being ready [*seped*] as Sothis [Sopdet], and Horus-Soped has come forth from you as Horus who is in Sothis;” *PT* 366. Sothis was also associated with Satis prior to the Ptolemaic period. In Philae, she is “Sothis who rises in the sky, mistress of Aswan, who shines in the sky and protects the son of Re, Ptolemy” (Eastern part of doorway to the 2nd pylon at the Temple of Isis at Philae, Ptolemy VIII, PM VI, p. 232 *et al.*); “sovereign of the stars” (Upper register of the eastern wall of the hypostyle at the Temple of Isis at Philae, Ptolemy VIII, PM VI p. 234 *et al.*); and “mistress of the beginning of the year” (Third scene from the north of the middle register of the east wall of Chamber III of the *mammisi*,

mistress of heaven, ruler of the living construction of the gods.”⁵² Isis-Sothis is said to follow her brother Osiris and act as his rearguard, throwing down his enemies. On earth, Isis-Sothis is named “someone strong,” and in the underworld, she takes the name Isis. Through the syncretism of both Satis and Anukis in their unique roles with the flood as well as the creative power of the flood itself, Isis is presented as a multifaceted, universal goddess.⁵³

4.3 The Central Outer Doorway

The central doorway of the temple was also decorated under Ptolemy III and similarly parallels the Osirian and Cataract deities.⁵⁴ While the doorway presents a broader theology than the inner sanctuary, the inundation remains a central theme.⁵⁵ The friezes concerning inundation in the doorway expand the meaning of the inundation theology found in the inner sanctuary. The

Ptolemy VIII, PM VI, p. 225, *et al.*). While it is more common to see Sothis (Sopdet *Spd.t*) take the place of Satis, the two are so interchangeable that Satis is also found where one would expect Sothis. For instance, a hymn on the wall of the central passage of the 2nd Pylon at Philae says *Wsir Sʿh ʿs.t Sty.t*, which is typically translated as “Osiris is Orion, Isis is Sothis.” The writing, however, says Satis (*Sty.t*), not Sothis (Martzolff, 2011, 165: Ph.2-110b). The choice to translate as Sothis, instead of Satis, is based on parallelism with Orion.

⁵² Bresciani and Pernigotti, 1978, 42-71, B.3. Translation adapted from Stadler (2012).

⁵³ When Isis “pours the flood, so that you flood the two countries,” her name is Sothis (=Satis), and when she “initiates it (=the flood) to fertilize the field,” her name is Anukis, who “gives rise to everything that is on/in the earth, so that they may live through you in this your name of the living.” Sothis-Satis and Anukis maintain their unique roles in the flood, which related to their name: Satis pouring out the flood (*sti*) and Anukis bringing it back to leave the silt behind (*ink*). This possibly false etymology dictating the roles of the two Cataract goddesses can be found in texts throughout the Greco-Roman period. See Valbelle (1981) 140-141.

⁵⁴ The lintel of the doorway shows Ptolemy III presenting *maʿat* (harmony, justice, truth, order) to Khnum-Re, Satis, and Anukis (B.3) and incense to Osiris-Onnophris, Isis, and Harpocrates (B.4). The intermediary vertical texts on the lintel provide a full character of Isis at Aswan, as both peaceful and martial by paralleling her identity as “the head of the army” (*hʿt pʿ mšʿ*) and “mother of the god.”

⁵⁵ The doorway consists of ten friezes in total. Four are arranged horizontally on the lintel of the doorway. Each of the vertical doorjambs has three stacked friezes. The deities present in the doorway are the Osirian triad, the Cataract triad, Mut, Hathor, Sobek-Ra, Min-Amun, and Mun. While they are not all specifically inundation deities, they each relate in some way to fertility, the Nile, and/or securing *maʿat*.

doorway, as the temple's border between the mortal and divine, similarly links the divine inundation theology to the mortal kingship and imperial policy of the Ptolemaic regime, which is mediated through the unique epithet of Isis as *ḥʿt pʿ mšʿ*, “head of the army.”

The frieze at the bottom right of the doorway makes a clear presentation of *do ut des* between Isis and the king concerning the inundation waters. It is important for three reasons: 1) it makes the association between Isis and the Nile flooding from the Cataract even more apparent; 2) it expands the meaning of the epithet “head of the army; and 3) it links Isis' role in the flood to her role as “head of the army.” This frieze shows Ptolemy III pouring out a libation of water from a *kbh.w* vase⁵⁶ over a table of food in front of Isis. While the *kbh.w* vase can be used for generic liquid libations, it is more specifically used to make water libations, especially from the purifying Cataract waters. In fact, the word *kbh.w* is also the Egyptian word used for the cataract.⁵⁷ Thus, the iconography of the frieze shows Ptolemy III offering cataract water to Isis as a libation. The vertical texts framing the central illustration narrate the image, making it clear that Ptolemy's water libation is meant to provoke the inundation from Elephantine. For instance, on the left side, the hieroglyphic text praises the king:

Long live the good god (=Ptolemy III),
 who offers a libation (*kbh*) to his mother,
 provoking high water, [which comes out] from Elephantine,
 the sweet springs (=Cataract, *kbh.w ndm.w*) flowing from the Two-Caverns.
 The Lord of the two lands (=Ptolemy III).⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Also called a *hes* vase.

⁵⁷ In the lintel frieze, Khnum's epithet “Lord of the Cataract” (*nb kbh.w*) is represented by the *nb* sign, the *kbh.w* vase, and the *mw* sign (𓄎𓄏).

⁵⁸ Transl. author. *nh ntr nfr hrp kbh n mwt.f ir mw wr.w [pr] m bw kbh.w ndm.w bs.w m kr-ty Nb tʿ.wy* [lac.]. On the right, the text is cut off, but the association with the inundation is clear: “Your (Ptolemy's) hands bring a water libation, provoking water [lac.]” Presumably, the missing text said something similar the right side, “provoking high water from Elephantine.”

The word I have translated as “libation” (*kbh*) is the singular for the word used for the Cataract (or “sweet springs” *kbh.w ndm.w*).⁵⁹ On the right, the text is cut off, but the association with the inundation is clear: “Your (Ptolemy’s) hands bring a water libation, provoking water [lac.]”

In both texts, Ptolemy’s water libation is meant to provoke the inundation from Elephantine, an important response to the current events of the inundation crisis of the mid-240s BCE. Moreover, the focus on Isis as the sole deity responsible for bringing out the inundation puts her in Khnum’s traditional role, expanding her role to encompass vast mythologies of creation and autochthonous inundation.

This frieze at the bottom right of the doorway also includes Isis’ epithet *hʿt pʿ mšʿ*, “head of the army.” The accompanying hieroglyphic texts provide a context for the meaning of the epithet. Above Isis’ head, we get the inscription:

Isis, head of the army, who is in Aswan,
Who brings the attackers to rest,⁶⁰
Who protects Egypt for Horus,
Who subjugates the foreign countries for the lord of the two lands.

This text explains Isis’ role as both defensive and offensive, both protecting and providing. Isis has a mythological role protecting both her husband-brother Osiris and her son Horus from mythic attackers, such as Seth and his legions. Her role as protectress expanded to her protecting the king and Egypt. The inscription describing her role as “head of the army” has similarities to her mythic protectress role, but the framing is certainly related to the real world, not the mythic world. Isis does not just protect Horus, she “protects Egypt for Horus,” who here is certainly identified as the king of Egypt—Ptolemy III, as seen by the winged solar disc and inscription

⁵⁹ The orthography is slightly different between “libation” *kbh* and “Cataract” *kbh.w*, with the latter having a slightly smaller version of the vessel and three vertical marks for plural instead of the expected three water signs, which is likely due to a limitation of space.

⁶⁰ Leitz (2003) 430: “*Die den Angreifer zur Ruhe bringt.*”

above his crown in the reliefs. Her role as protectress is not just defensive against “attackers” but is also offensive through the subjugation of the foreign countries, which relates specifically to the imperial project of the king in the 3rd Syrian War.⁶¹

According to this inscription, in her role as *hʿt pʿ mšʿ*, “head of the army,” Isis has three major purposes: 1) make Egypt peaceful from attackers; 2) defend Egypt; and 3) subjugate foreign countries for the king. While this may seem like a generic description, it describes the military actions that Ptolemy III accomplished in the short period of his reign before his trip to the First Cataract (c. 246—243 BCE): he brought a revolt to rest; he protected Egypt; and he subjugated foreign countries. A summary of these actions was circulated throughout Egypt in the *Decree of Alexandria*, which dates to 243 BCE, around the time of Ptolemy III’s visit to the Cataract.⁶² The decree certainly circulated in the First Cataract region, since the Greek text is reconstructed from a fragmentary version found in Elephantine, an island in the First Cataract. This provides further evidence that the theological content of the temple responded to current events, including the 3rd Syrian War and the mid-240s BCE inundation crisis.

⁶¹ This aspect of subjugating foreign wars is a feature on the other two texts of Isis “head of the army” on the doorway. In a relief on the upper left side of the doorway, Isis addresses the king: “I have placed all the foreign lands for you under your sandal.” In the vertical text in the center of the doorway’s lintel, Isis is described as “she, who subjugates foreign countries for the lord of the two lands under his sandal.” Placing the enemies under the sandal is a magical ritual of subjugation that has a long history in Egypt. See Ritner (1993) 120-129 for the magical ritual of subjugating foreigners under a sandal.

⁶² The decree is known in a bilingual hieroglyphic and demotic version found in Akhmim and a fragmentary Greek version found in Elephantine. Concerning the military actions of Ptolemy III, the decree states in the Hieroglyphic version: “...he preserved Egypt from insurrections at all times; he fought for it in a distant valley;” in the Demotic version: “...ensuring that the [gods] of Egypt were spared by the war at all times, fighting for them in a distant country;” and in the Greek version: “he has kept the land in [peace, fighting] in its defense at a long distance away, [and restoring the life of men].” (Greek text: BE_2013.472 + 475; el-Masry, et al., 2012; Agut-Labordère, 2017, 152; Pfeiffer, 2018; Burstein, 2016, 77-86; Pfeiffer, 2015, 65-70).

Moreover, the epithet *hʿt pʿ mšʿ*, “head of the army,” may be more nuanced than it seems, because the word *mšʿ* has various meanings. While the meaning of the term has been debated,⁶³ the ambiguity of the term adds its own power to the epithet. I propose three readings that work concurrently on different semantic levels. The first is “head of the army,” which I use to mean Isis as the stand in for the king as general of the army. The context for this meaning is national and imperial.⁶⁴ The second is “head of the troops,” which could refer both to specific garrisoned troops at Aswan or the mythic troops that help Isis ensure the inundation.⁶⁵ The context is local, mythological, and defensive. The third is “head of the people,” which is both national and local. The term *mšʿ*, which is typically translated as army, was experiencing a period of transition in the Ptolemaic period and could also simply mean “people,” “crowd,” or “multitude.”⁶⁶ This occurs in a lintel scene in Philae, which glosses *mšʿ* as “men and women.”⁶⁷ The context is royal and geographic with ecological consequences. As divine queen, Isis, mediated through the king, is the head of the people. Geographically, the Cataract is the head of Egypt, with its south-to-north orientation via the flow of the Nile. In her iteration at Aswan, Isis is both the queenly head of the people, the geographic head of the country, and the leader of the inundation flood. In this role, she utilizes the Nile inundation waters and the bountiful harvest it brings to support the

⁶³ See especially Laskowska-Kusztal (2007) and Zaki (2008).

⁶⁴ Žabkar (1988) 55-75; Bresciani and Pernigotti (1978) 21-26.

⁶⁵ Laskowska-Kusztal (2007); Zaki (2008).

⁶⁶ Like Coptic *ⲙⲏⲏⲩⲉ* people or crowd. For instance, in the Satrap Stele, a text from the early Ptolemaic period, *mšʿ* is glossed with “men and women” (Cairo JdÉ 22182; Ritner (in Simpson, 2003, 392-397; Ockinga, 2018; Schäfer, 2011). In North Saqqara, during a mummified ibis fraud scandal, investigating authorities issued orders that burial processions for the ibises were to be made up of “an assembly of people” (*pʿ mšʿ*) from the Serapeum and priests (*O.Hor.* 19.vo.8-12 and *O.Hor.* 21.vo.11-12; see Monson, 2019, 43). Moreover, the term *mr-mšʿ*, which once meant “overseer of the army,” came to mean “overseer of the people” as an administrative and religious designation in the Ptolemaic period. The term is translated as *strategos* in Greek, which similarly came to have a non-military, administrative meaning in the Ptolemaic period.

⁶⁷ Martzloff (2011) 160.

population, infrastructure, and army of Egypt in order to defend it from attackers, both domestic and foreign; to subjugate foreign lands; and to protect and provide for Egypt and its people. Isis, the king, the inundation, and the cataract border share in the joint role of protector and provider for Egypt and its people.

By highlighting Isis' role as *h't p' mš'*, "head of the army (or troops, or people)," the relationship between Ptolemy III and Isis was strengthened, and he gained legitimacy for his activities in defending Egypt from revolt (presumably against native Egyptians) and for his imperial activities outside of Egypt. Since the blame for floods, famines, and revolts were typically laid at the foot of the pharaoh, a close association with Isis would have been advantageous for Ptolemy III during time of crisis. Moreover, he associated himself with the Nile inundation, which was both a barometer for his kingship and a means to an end of the famine and revolt. Through his association with the Nile inundation at the Cataract border of Egypt in the Temple of Isis at Aswan, he also strengthened the borders of Egypt.

4.4 The Festival

Finally, the inundation was tied into the rituals and festival celebrated in the Temple of Isis at Aswan, which is portrayed in a series of ritual and festival inscriptions dating from the reign of Ptolemy IV, the son of Ptolemy III.⁶⁸ As discussed above, one of the innovations made by Ptolemy III in the Canopus Decree following the inundation crisis of the mid-240s BCE was to add an epagomenal day celebrating himself and his wife every four years, which had the consequence of tethering the celebrations of the royal couple to two inundation related festivals

⁶⁸ While there is no information about the festivals of the temple dating from the time of Ptolemy III, there are texts and images that discuss the celebration of the festivals from the time of his son, Ptolemy IV, which point to the function and theology of the temple inaugurated by Ptolemy III during ecological and political crisis. The festival inscriptions are found in the inner passage of the central doorway and the southern lateral doorway, which may have been a ritual entrance.

together in the yearly cultic calendar—the New Year’s festival and the Bastet festival. The Temple of Isis at Aswan, in part, reflected this innovation by celebrating the New Year’s inundation festival with elements from the Bastet festival (related to the Myth of the Sun’s Eye, explored in the next chapter) and a strong component of Ptolemaic kingship, which contrasted with the traditional timing of the Cataract inundation festival celebrated by the temples of Elephantine Island at the height or even recession of the inundation.⁶⁹ The focus on the New Year’s festival in the temple of Aswan may have been an attempt to harmonize national festivals and national mythologies with local inundation festivals and mythologies, all while linking Ptolemaic kingship to both local and national ecotheologies of inundation.⁷⁰ Moreover, the New Year’s festival was a ritual of rejuvenation through the flood and the protection against enemies, which fits within the imperial and domestic priorities of Ptolemaic kings to conquer enemies abroad and maintain peace within Egypt.

5. Inundation Kings

Ptolemy III’s response to the inundation crisis of the mid-240s BCE tied his sovereignty to the ecotheologies of inundation and, in the process, further modulated the millennia-old ecotheologies of the First Cataract border region to adapt it to his current needs. Egyptian

⁶⁹ For instance, there is a hymn in the inner passage of the central doorway, in which Ptolemy IV worships Isis and calls for protection “from the occurrence of hateful things against him this year” (Bresciani and Pernigotti, 1978, B.15). This is likely a reference both to the hostile deities that threaten *ma’at* during the epagomenal days at the New Year (Žabkar, 1988, 121) as well as foreign and domestic enemies of the Ptolemaic regime. The southern lateral entrance is focused on the ritual aspects of the temple and records direct speech of Ptolemy IV to the temple visitors (Bresciani and Pernigotti, 1978, C.2 and C.3). This festival is discussed in more detail in the previous chapter. The most famous example of the festival from the Ptolemaic period is from the joint reign of Cleopatra III and her son King Ptolemy IX in 115 BCE. *OGIS* 168; *I.Th.Sy.* 244; *I.Prose* 24; *SB* 5.8883; *PHI* 219033.

⁷⁰ The celebration of the New Year and the protection of the king had already been celebrated for generations at Philae. Hymn VIII in Room VII of the Temple of Isis at Philae is evidence for a ritual pertaining to the New Year from the period of Ptolemy II (Žabkar, 1988, 115-127).

pharaohs had always been inundation kings,⁷¹ since the ecological necessity of the yearly Nilotic flood on the economy and welfare of Egypt formed the foundation of the king's association with the inundation.⁷² The inundation crisis of the mid-240s BCE pushed the Ptolemaic regime to further adopt Egyptian forms of kingship, especially those concerning the inundation.⁷³ This had long-ranging consequences for the subsequent formation of Ptolemaic kingship, which increasingly tied itself to ecological concerns of the Nile inundation and the fertility of the land, which translated to tax revenue. As a result, the Ptolemaic regime's relationship with the environment of Egypt transformed from one exclusively constructed by objectification, exploitation, and expulsion of nature to one that, at times, privileged the embodied association of and interconnectedness with nature based on indigenous Egyptian modes of sovereignty and alternative forms of masculinity, namely the ecomasculine.⁷⁴

The inundation-based ecomasculinity of Ptolemaic kings from Ptolemy III on is most evident in their close association and identification with the Nile and the inundation-related deities, such as Osiris, Isis, Horus, Re, and Hapy.⁷⁵ For instance, in the *mammisi*, or birth-house, of Philae, which was originally built by Ptolemy III and Berenike II and was another inundation-

⁷¹ Cf. rainmakers in traditional African societies; Oestigaard (2011) 57.

⁷² Oestigaard (2011) 57. cf. Wittfogel (1957).

⁷³ The role of the inundation on Ptolemaic kingship has been less appreciated in scholarship, except for Bonneau (1964 and 1971). For instance, in Pfeiffer's (2016) article on Hellenistic kingship in Egypt, the Nile flood is only briefly mentioned and only in the context of the timing and meaning of royal processions. This can be contrasted with the prominent role the inundation and fertility play in scholarship on pharaonic Egyptian kingship, such as in Frankfort (1978), which also extends its discussion to the Ptolemaic period.

⁷⁴ See fn. 2 of this chapter for a definition of ecomasculine and Section 2.3 of the Introduction for a discussion of ecofeminism.

⁷⁵ This is explored in more detail in Introduction 1.4.2. For a discussion of the Hapy and the Ptolemies, see Recklinghausen (2014).

related temple in the First Cataract, Ptolemy VIII takes on the role of the god Hapy, who was the deification of the Nile inundation:

Title of the king: the good god, the Nile inundation (Hapy) of Egypt, who floods Egypt with his beauty, who increases the sacrifices of the father of the gods, who lets the field produce its food, King Ptolemy VIII.⁷⁶

As this text shows, the Ptolemaic king was, at times, directly identified with the Nile inundation. More commonly, kingship was more broadly linked to the Nile inundation, both in the kings' role in securing the inundation and in the inundation's role as barometer for kingship.

Moreover, the Ptolemaic king's role in the "ecological triangle" of sovereign, nature, and the gods underwrote his ability to uphold *ma'at* (truth, justice, order) and become an effective (*mnḥ*) ruler. The important connection between the Nile inundation, kingship, and the gods is expressed on a lintel decoration on a pylon at Philae in the First Cataract from the period of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II and Cleopatra II.⁷⁷ The lintel shows a scene of the royal couple offering to both Khnum and Isis in their shared roles as universal creator and inundation deity. The purpose of the offering was to secure the inundation, the prosperity of Egypt, and kingship for the Ptolemaic sovereigns. This is reinforced through the addition of the *mw* or water sign (𓆎) as a determinative to Isis' traditional epithet *di' nḥ* ("gives life"). As noted in Chapter 1.3.2, this

⁷⁶ Junker (1965) F.8 (pg. 37). Other similar texts: Junker G.12 (pg. 63); H.2; *et al.* In each instance, the king offers water to Khnum (and in F.8 to his consorts Satis and Anukis) as the flood god to ensure the Nile inundation and the fertility of Egypt. Elsewhere in the Philae *mammisi*, King Ptolemy VIII is associated with Horus, who is told by Ra that when he has dominion over Egypt, "the flood will come to you in its time to preserve everything that grows to be eaten" (Goedicke (1982) 80 and 162; Thompson and Koenen (1984) 123. The association with the Egyptian king and Hapy is not a Ptolemaic invention. In the Middle Kingdom text, the instruction of Seheteb-ib-re for his children, Amenemhet III (1842-1797)) compares himself favorably to Hapy, the Nile inundation god, in his ability to make Egypt verdant and then lists nourishing qualities in providing food for the people, summarized as "the king is sustenance" (M. Lichtheim (2006) I 128; cited in Thompson and Koenen (1984) 121.

⁷⁷ See Martzloff (2011) 160-161.

variation transforms the meaning of the epithet to “gives life through the inundation” (𓄏𓆎𓅓), referencing her role in bringing forth the Nile flood.⁷⁸ The marginal text of the lintel links the Ptolemaic sovereign’s role in securing the Nile flood as shown in the iconography of the lintel with the traditional activities of Egyptian kingship:

The Gods Euergetai
who make Egypt green,
who illuminate the two chapels (=Egypt),
who establish the laws like the twice-great Thoth,
who consecrate what was ruined and set in order what was in rebellion,
who satisfy the gods in their abodes.⁷⁹

Encapsulating the tenets of Egyptian kingship—fertility, justice, peace (through conquering), order, and piety, the text and the image of the lintel express the cosmological, economic, and political importance of the Nile inundation on kingship in Egypt in the Ptolemaic period.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Martzloff (2011) 160 suggests “*qui donne la vie*” would mean “*qui apporte l’inondation*” with the addition of the *mw* sign. The lintel scene also makes a visual pun in the offering to Khnum. The king presents Khnum (*Hnmw*, 𓆎𓆏) with *m* a *hnm* vase (𓆎), likely meant to represent the link between the inundation waters and Khnum’s creative powers with the potter’s wheel. In the text of the offering scene, Khnum is called “the great Nun, who leads the flood” (Martzloff, 2011, 160).

⁷⁹ Martzloff (2011) 160. Translation my own. There are many parallels for kingship expressions such as these. For instance, the ghost of the murdered King Amenemhet I of the 12th dynasty tells his son Senusret I: “I was one who produced barley and loved the corn-god. The Nile respected me at every defile. None hungered in my years, nor thirsted in them. Men dwelt <in peace> through that which I wrought...All that I commanded was as it should be” (Frankfort, 1978, 57).

⁸⁰ The link between kingship and the Nile inundation is found in the ritual of the coronation, which typically coincided with the period of inundation around (the typical) Thoth I. The flood would serve as a yearly confirmation of kingship and recommitment to obligations of royal power. In the Ptolemaic period, the king even took an oath “to protect and provide the land and the water” at his coronation (The details of the coronation are provided by the Roman author Nigidius Figulus in the 1st c. BCE. *De Sphaera* 98; Mommsen, 1858, 253; Swoboda, 1964, 124; Thompson and Koenen, 1984, 125; Thompson, 2012, 136-137. “*Deinde alterum illis ius iurandum inponitur sementim per terram aquamque custodiendam comparandamque.*”

6. Conclusion

Even before the inundation crisis of the mid-240s BCE, the Nile and its inundation were central themes in the conception of the Ptolemaic empire. For instance, in Theocritus' *Encomium to Ptolemy Philadelphus*, Ptolemy II's claim to global empire is centered around the specific ecological favor he is shown by Zeus through the inundation of the Nile:

Revered kings are watched over by Zeus son of Cronus, and that king [Ptolemy II] is preeminent whom Zeus has loved from the moment of his birth. Great prosperity attends him, and great is the expanse of land, great the expanse of sea that he rules. Countless lands and countless peoples raise their crops with the aid of rain from Zeus, **but none of them produces as much as the lowlands of Egypt when the Nile in flood soaks and breaks up the soil...**⁸¹

In this Greek text, Zeus takes on the role of the Egyptian gods in the “ecological triangle” and centers the Nile as the foundation of royal power, economic prosperity, and, ultimately, the Ptolemaic empire.

Following the inundation crisis of the mid-240s BCE during the reign of Ptolemy III, the ecological underpinning to Ptolemaic kingship and empire-building was tied into the autochthonous inundation ecotheologies anchored at the First Cataract border region.⁸² At Philae in the First Cataract, Ptolemy III was named: “The brave one who has protected the gods, a potent wall (*inb-mnh*) for The Beloved Land (=Egypt).”⁸³ Sharing terminology with the

⁸¹ Theocritus, *Idyll* 17.73-92. Transl. Neil Hopkinson. Emphasis added. The next section of the text enumerates the geographic extent of Ptolemy II's empire. Διὶ Κρονίωνι μέλοντι / αἰδοῖοι βασιλῆες, ὃ δ' ἔξοχος ὄν κε φιλήσῃ / γεινόμενον τὰ πρῶτα· πολὺς δέ οἱ ὄλβος ὀπαδεῖ, / πολλὰς δὲ κρατέει γαίας, πολλὰς δὲ θαλάσσας. / Μυρία ἄπειροί τε καὶ ἔθνεα μυρία φωτῶν / λήιον ἀλδήσκουσιν ὀφελλόμεναι Διὸς ὄμβρω, / ἀλλ' οὐτις τόσα φύει ὅσα χθαμαλὰ Αἴγυπτος, / Νεῖλος ἀναβλύζων διερὰν ὅτε βῶλακα θρύπτει.

⁸² The production of border power, however, was not limited to the First Cataract region.

⁸³ This is Ptolemy III Neby name. Emphasis added. While the border as wall is purely metaphor in the Cataract region, Ptolemy III's characterization of the potent wall (*inb-mnh*) shares the metaphor with the “turbulent water” (*mw.f nšn r gs.f rsy*) of the Cataract near Khnum's temple at Elephantine, which is characterized as causing “travelling to be walled up” (*m itrw i(n)by*) (*Famine Stele* 1.10; Goedicke (1989) 74-75. Emphasis added). It must also be noted that the

cataract's turbulent waters in the *Famine Stele*, Ptolemy III embodied the cataract and the border, as well as their protective and productive power. Furthermore, the text of the central doorway shows Ptolemy III as the agent in provoking the inundation, mediated through libations to Isis, which shows him taking on the role of both Khnum and Isis, the creators gods of the Nile inundation.

This chapter reveals an inversion of the tenets of ecofeminism, namely that there is an affinity between woman and nature by providing, instead, an example of ecomasculinity. This comes out of an Egyptian worldview that associates nature with both genders and moving water particularly with flowing semen of the masculine gender-fluid creator gods, such as Khnum.⁸⁴ Ptolemy III, however, is embedded in this ecological, creative role but mediated through Isis, whose association with the flood and its creative potential becomes increasingly prominent in the Ptolemaic period at the First Cataract border. Through an investigation of the absence of the Nile inundation, this case study reveals the presence of the Ptolemaic king in the “ecological triangle”—sovereign(s)-deities-nature. Furthermore, it reveals a dynamic process of bordering through inundation that is responsive to current events, as well as a sovereign participating in a model of masculinity transformed through continuity. Thus, the Ptolemaic sovereigns cannot be considered only a superstructural presence but instead are embedded in the natural world of Egypt through the ecotheologies of the First Cataract border. Upon his and his queen's

adjective *mnḥ* is used as the epithet of Ptolemy III in Egyptian. His epithet in Greek is Εὐεργέτης, typically rendered in transliteration as Euergetes and translated as “Benefactor.” See Koenen (1993) 57-66. The epithet *mnḥ* is also used for Khnum at the Roman temple of Esna 64 (Klotz, 2022, <https://bookdown.org/shemanefer/Esna2/intercolumnar-wall-f-and-south-east-door-57-64.html>).

⁸⁴ Troy (1997) 259. This is particularly true in the Heliopolitan mythology, which influenced the Elephantine creator mythology.

subsequent deification as *Theoi Euergetai*, the royal couple will transcend the mortal plane both as divine and as ecological.

CHAPTER 3: EVERYTHING THE LIGHT TOUCHES: BORDERING EMPIRES WITH THE MYTH OF THE SUN’S EYE

1. Introduction

In the birth house of the Temple of Isis at Philae, built under King Ptolemy VIII, a hymn celebrates the goddess Hathor and her “good son,” the king himself, referencing one of the most popular and widespread myths in the Egyptian temples of the Ptolemaic period—the Myth of the Sun’s Eye.

Hymn to Hathor: Hathor, mistress of Biggeh, gold of the gods, gold of the goddesses, who came from Nubia and who reached Biggeh as the great *Wpš.t* [goddess of flame], who purified her limbs on the Abaton and settled there forever. Shu is with her and creates her beauty, and Thoth delights her. I give you what the sun sees in the sky and what its eyes encompass.

Title of the King: The good God, the son of Hathor, splendid image of the one who came from Nubia and delighted the heart of the Lady of Punt, King Ptolemy VIII.¹

This text provides the basic outline of the Myth of the Sun’s Eye, which tells the story of the Egyptian solar deity’s (Ra’s) daughter (his Eye or Hathor-Tefnut), who returns to Egypt from a period of absence in Nubia, after her father sent the gods Shu and Thoth to pacify her. In addition to a summary of the myth, the hymn includes a summation of universal kingship—everything seen in the sun’s light and everything the sun’s eyes can encompass is under the control of the king. The text finishes by characterizing the ruling Ptolemaic king as the son of Hathor in her form as Eye, who comes from Nubia.

The Myth of the Sun’s Eye models one form of Egyptian universal kingship, relying on the pacification of Nubia, which played an important function in the Ptolemaic imperial ideology. The myth became a central ideological feature in Ptolemaic temple decoration and

¹ Junker et al. (1965) 45. G1.

architecture throughout Egypt and had particular importance at the First Cataract border, the location of the Eye's return, transformation, and transcendence.

Why was a myth centered on unbounded female power so widespread and popular in the Ptolemaic period? What does this myth contribute to the understanding of Ptolemaic imperial ideology vis à vis Nubia? This chapter analyzes the myth through border/migration theory to understand its resonances for the Ptolemaic rulers and the function of its patronage. The myth has been interpreted in a variety of ways, from symbolizing the return of the Nile inundation to the return of the triumphant hero. The Myth of the Sun's Eye is particularly interesting as a model for kinopolitical border circulation, or the circulation of people, institutions, and ideologies for the construction and maintenance of a border. The myth establishes the border through the transformation of the Eye from anthropomorphic to zoomorphic and back when she transgresses the border. In Egypt, she is a beautiful woman, who defends her father. In Nubia, she is a raging lioness, who destroys the enemies of her father. Furthermore, her return across the First Cataract border is presented as a *hieros gamos*, a sacred sexual act that results in the conception of the king as Horus. The significant presence of the iconography and references to the Myth of the Sun's Eye in the Ptolemaic temples, especially in the First Cataract and the southern borderlands, constructed and maintained the territorial and conceptual border and ritually and ideologically reinforced Ptolemaic subjugation and control of Nubia.

2. Myth of the Sun's Eye / Myth of the Distant Goddess

The Myth of the Sun's Eye, also called the Myth of the Wandering Goddess or the Myth of the Distant Goddess, is a pervasive myth in ancient Egyptian history.² The myth was alluded

² The most important studies are Junker (1911); Sethe (1912); Junker (1917); Inconnu-Bocquillon (2001). For bibliographic references, see Inconnu-Bocquillon (2001) 9 ff. with additional bibliography contributed by Quack (2002) 285 ff. n. 5, 9, 13, 15 ff. See also Darnell

to from the Old Kingdom onwards,³ but no literary, narrative account of the myth seemed to have existed until the Roman period. Nevertheless, the myth was popular in temple construction, especially in the Ptolemaic period, where it was featured in at least twenty-two Ptolemaic temples.⁴ The outline of the myth was established by Junker, using a combination of written allusions and mythological scenes in temple decorations throughout Egypt.⁵ Scholarship on variations of the myth have enriched Junker's reconstruction, especially showing connections to related myths, variations of the myth in their local contexts, the presence of the myth in the *grammaire du temple*, and the local aspects of the festival landscape.⁶ The Roman period

(1995); Lieven (2009); Richter (2010); Darnell (2010); Barrett (2011); Jørgensen (2015); Butler (2019).

³ Early attestations of the myth are discussed by Junker (1911) 10-12; Sethe (1912) 4 ff.; Richter (2010) 157-159; Darnell (2010) 100-101. Junker is careful to admit that the early allusions may not mean the myth was fully formed at that time. Moreover, Junker (1911) distinguishes the Myth of the Sun's Eye from other similar Hathor myths, including Hathor flying from Punt to Edfu as a falcon, though there are similarities and likely mutual influence (12-16); Hathor as the eye of the sun in an annihilation myth of mankind, where Thoth is also sent by Ra to pacify her (16-19). See also Vandier d'Abbadie 1937: 45, no. 2218, pl. 29; Brunner-Traut 1979: 16-18.

⁴ Richter (2010) 155. Junker (1911) 1: the legend exists "in fast allen Tempeln der griechisch-römischen Zeit, jedesmal mit örtlicher Färbung."

⁵ Junker (1911); for a critical response to Junker (1911), see Sethe (1912). This methodology has been criticized by *e.g.*, Inconnu-Bocquillon, 2001, who emphasizes the importance of context for understanding religious texts, including architectural temple context and a temple's theological system (1; cf. Gutbub 1973). Junker's reconstruction is based on Greco-Roman texts (11). He notes that there were local differences to the myth and the festivals in almost every locale (9). Especially popular was the goddess' relationship to the special form of Hathor celebrated at each temple (9). When discussing the relationship between the Kom Ombo and the Philae version, Junker states that because of the existence of different versions even at the same temples: "sie zeigt, daß die Priester wohl wußten, daß den verschiedenen Legenden von der Einwanderung einer Göttin aus Nubien eine einzige Erzählung zugrunde lag" (Junker, 1911, 67).

⁶ Connection to related myths: Sethe (1912); Philae: Inconnu-Bocquillon (2001); Medamud: Darnell (1995); Wadi el-Hallel and Dendera: Richter (2010). Derchain (1962) coined the term *grammaire du temple*, which "refers to the close relation between the texts and their location within the temple. The location of a text could determine the choice of words, spelling, iconographic variation in the signs and even the grammatical constructions employed in the text" (Kaper, 2020, 1146). The idea extends beyond linguistic grammar and is used to understanding the underlying "grammar" of temples and their decoration including inscriptions, architecture, and iconography. See also, Winter (1987); Kurth (1998) 52-64; Minas-Nerpel (2012) 364.

papyrological texts in demotic Egyptian and Greek have also been useful in reconstructing the myth.⁷

2.1 The Myth

As noted by Inconnu-Bocquillon, the production of a constructed *ur*-text ignores the multiformity of the myth as well as its temple and theological contexts.⁸ Only a year after Junker published his reconstruction of the myth, Sethe countered it by teasing apart Junker's reconstruction and organizing the myth into five clear branches.⁹ It is expedient, however, to present a cobbled together version of the myth *à la* Junker to understand the basic outline and themes of the myth. In the following construction, the Philae versions of the myth are privileged, though it is drawn from multiple versions of the myth's tradition.¹⁰

⁷ There are at least eight versions of the Demotic text (Dieleman and Moyer, 2010, 438): Demotic: *P.Leid.Dem.* I 384: Spiegelberg (1917), Cenival (1988); *P.Tebt.Tait* 8: Tait (1974), Tait (1977) 35-37, T. 3; *P. Lille dem. 31*: Cenival (1985), Cenival (1987); Cenival (1989); See also, Tait (1976); Raven (1982) 73-74; Quack (2005) 148-160; Greek: *P. BM 274*: Reitzenstein (1923); West (1969); Totti (1985) 168-182; Signoretti (2010); Feder (2013). Allusions to the Myth of the Sun's Eye can also be found in the Roman demotic text the *Book of Thoth* (Jasnow and Zauzich, 1998, 609 ff.; 2005, I 23-4, 74-76; 206-209; 260).

⁸ Inconnu-Bocquillon (2001) 1. Sethe (1912) makes a similar argument directly responding the publication of Junker (1911). Moreover, Sethe (1912) argues for including elements of the myth from different versions (such as Sekhmet's Destruction of Mankind myth) and from different time periods, without thinking one is the original ("der deshalb aber doch nicht als das Ursprüngliche genommen werden darf;" Sethe, 1912, 4). Multiformity is borrowed from Homeric studies, in which it used by Albert Lord instead of variation or variant to emphasize the fluidity of the poetry (Nagy, 2001, 109). This word counters the expectation of an "original" with "preference or precedence," instead acknowledging that "the idea may exist in several forms" (Lord, 1995, 100).

⁹ Sethe (1912) 38-40.

¹⁰ Sethe (1912) shows that the myth in Philae is itself made up of various versions of the myth, which sometimes contradict each other. It is not at all the case that there is unity in the Philae myth any more than in the myth more generally.

Set in a mythological time when Ra was king on earth, his Eye, who is usually characterized as his daughter¹¹ and is called by many names (usually Tefnut-Hathor but could also be associated with Isis), becomes angry and leaves both Egypt and her role as protectress of her father.¹² She flees south to Nubia (Bugem/Keneset) and takes on the characteristics of the lioness Tefnut.¹³ While in the Nubian desert, she ravages her enemies and the landscape, leaving a bloodbath in her wake. While there, she forgets Egypt and her former life, becoming a native of Nubia.¹⁴ Back in Egypt, Ra is missing his daughter and the protection she provides for him, without which the *ma'at* and security of Egypt is at stake.¹⁵ He sends her brother Shu, who is a powerful lion, and Thoth, the god of wisdom and magic, to facilitate her return to Egypt at the side of Ra. While in Nubia, Shu and Thoth take the form of animals, usually monkeys, though Shu sometimes takes on his lion form.¹⁶ Through storytelling, songs, magical spells and potions, presents of *mnw*-jars and the *wensheb*, and promises of offerings, temples, and festivals, Thoth

¹¹ She is most often called Ra's daughter, especially in her form as Tefnut. Occasionally other relationships arise, or, more commonly, no specific relationship is stated (Sethe, 1912, 19).

¹² This reconstruction relies mainly on Junker (1911), Inconnu-Bocquillon (2001), and Richter (2010).

¹³ Sethe (1912) 20 claims that the Tefnut aspect of the Eye myth is only from one branch of tradition, though it is very common, especially in the First Cataract. He suggests that *Wpš.t* ("Lady of Flame") version of the myth (discussed below), which is also popular in the First Cataract, especially in Elephantine, may be a non-Tefnut version of the myth.

¹⁴ Junker (1911) 4: "Sie hatte ihre Wüste nie verlassen und kannte Ägypten nicht." Later, Junker says that only through Thoth's magical spells will the goddess leave her homeland ("sie zum Verlassen ihrer Heimat zu bewegen Verlassen" (4).

¹⁵ Sethe (1912) 17 see this very differently. He argues that this part of the myth is related to the Destruction of Humankind, where Ra sends out Sekhmet to defeat his enemies for him. When she does her job too well and starts uncontrollably attacking humanity, Ra sends his agents to pacify her and return her home. Sethe, then, envisions the Eye as performing Ra's duties in Nubia, but she is needed back in Egypt.

¹⁶ Sethe (1912) 1.

and Shu are successful in either convincing her to return or, in other versions, kidnapping her.¹⁷ They start a (guarded) procession back to Egypt, accompanied by music, dancing, and festivities.

Once the Eye crosses the border into Egypt at the First Cataract of the Nile, she is transformed from a blood-thirsty lioness to a beautiful woman, through purification in the sacred waters of the Abaton at Philae. Here, she meets her father Ra with jubilant embraces. Her return is symbolic of a *hieros gamos*, a sacred sexual act, between alternatively the Eye and Ra or the Eye and the inundation waters of the Cataract, either of which will eventually result in the birth of the Horus-child, associated with the king of Egypt.¹⁸ In Philae, Ra is associated with Khnum, thus she is reunited with her father through his presence in the Nile Cataract temples. Through this process of pacification and purification at the border, peace and order are returned to Egypt.

Subsequently, the Eye is celebrated at Philae and commences a great festival procession on her divine barque down the Nile, stopping traditionally at nine temples.¹⁹ Junker highlights that the double nature of the goddess did not change. While her peaceful demeanor characterized her outer appearance, her inner nature was still brimming with unbridled power.²⁰ It is Thoth's daily responsibility to pacify the goddess with magic and wine, lest her violent rage return. Inevitably, argues Junker, she is not satisfied in her role as intoxicated goddess and protectress of Ra, so she returns to the desert and the destruction of her enemies in Nubia.²¹ As a result, Ra establishes an annual festival in her honor that encourages and celebrates her return at the

¹⁷ One major argument seems to be the comparison between the desert of Nubia and the luscious rivers and green fields of Egypt (Junker (1911) 5). Sethe (1911) 32 highlights that certain versions of the myth have the Eye return to Egypt on her own accord, without Shu and Thoth.

¹⁸ For the *hieros gamos* aspect of the myth, see Barrett (2011) 199-261.

¹⁹ Junker mentions: Philae, Kom Ombo, Edfu, El-kab, Esneh, Dendera, Athribis.

²⁰ Junker (1911) 7.

²¹ Junker (1911) 8.

designated time (*i.e.*, the time of the inundation) with song, dance, inebriation, and extravagant offerings.

2.2 The Characters of the Myth

The Eye: The Eye of Ra, was the daughter of Ra. She was also known as Hathor in her form as beautiful woman and Tefnut in her form as ravaging lioness.²² For part of the year, she lives in Nubia in her Tefnut form, and for the other part of the year, she lives in Egypt as her Hathor form. In her dual form, she is also associated with Sekhmet and Bastet. As Hathor, she is the lady of play, dance, music, and inebriation. Moreover, Hathor is the goddess of foreign lands, which serves her as the Eye, who is abroad and is returned to Egypt.²³ At Philae, she is also associated with flame goddess *Wpš.t*, who has a human face and a primordial serpent on her head, as well as another flame goddess *Nsr.t*.²⁴ She is also closely associated with the fire-breathing uraeus serpent.²⁵ One of her main roles in Egypt is the protection of Ra during his daily and yearly cycles. She is the sister of Shu, also known as Arensnuphis, a god with Nubian origin, especially in Philae. Hathor has a temple on the east side of the island of Philae. Isis is also specifically linked to the Eye, especially at Philae. Isis had been known as the uraeus of Ra in the pharaonic period.²⁶

²² For the Eye as Hathor, see Sethe (1911) 28-36.

²³ Sethe (1911) 30. Hathor, for instance, is the goddess of Punt and of *Bwgm*.

²⁴ Often translated as “Lady of the Flame” and was from Sehel Island. Junker (1911) 9, 36. Sethe (1912) 7-9. Through this association, the Eye is also related to the goddess Satis in the First Cataract. Sethe (1912) notes an issue with Junker’s reconstruction around the character of *Wpš.t*, who is said to have come from Sehel to Egypt, especially to Biggeh Island, which is farther south. *Nsr.t* is another flame goddess, who is prevalent in the mythology as it exists in the First Cataract, especially at Philae. *Nsr.t* finds her home at Biggeh island and is linked particularly to Sekhmet (Inconnu-Bocquillon, 2001, 4-5).

²⁵ Sethe (1911) 9. *Wpš.t* is typically depicted as a human woman with an erect primordial serpent on her head (Sethe, 1911, 13).

²⁶ See Münster (1968) 106-110.

Ra: The sun god of Egypt, also known as Amun-Ra. He wants his daughter, his Eye, to return from Nubia back to Egypt. Either he misses his daughter or requires her protection. He sends her brother Shu and Thoth. Ra sets up an annual festival in her honor to celebrate her return. He is closely associated with Atum, the great creator god of Egypt, as well as Khnum in the First Cataract.

Shu: The lion-formed god, brother of the Eye. Shu is sent by Ra to bring his sister back to Egypt. In the processions following the Eye's return to Egypt, he takes up the lute, possibly in the form of a monkey, and performs dances in front of his sister.²⁷ In some versions of the myth, Shu, in his lion-form, protects Egypt from enemies and rebels.²⁸ He is associated with the Nubian god Arensnuphis in the First Cataract and Lower Nubia.²⁹ While both gods have lion forms, the lion form of Arensnuphis is particularly emphasized, and he is featured more prominently in versions of the myth in the Nubian borderlands.³⁰ He has a temple dedicated to him on Philae, where he is linked to Herakles, Khnum, and Hathor.³¹

Thoth: Thoth is the sometimes ibis-headed, sometimes baboon-shaped god of wisdom and magic. He is sent with Shu to retrieve the Eye. He is particularly important in the pacification of the Eye for his storytelling, magical spells, and pacifying potions, which are necessary in bringing back the Eye to Egypt and maintaining her peaceful disposition once in Egypt. Thoth also has a Nubian form, known as Thoth of Pnubs or just Pnubs. Thoth is the main deity at the temple of Dakka in the Dodekaschoinos.

²⁷ Junker (1911) 38.

²⁸ Sethe (1912) 25.

²⁹ See Lanciers (2016) 206-209 for the origins of Arensnuphis, especially at the First Cataract and Lower Nubia. Cf. de Meulenaere (1977) 245-251.

³⁰ Junker (1911) 40.

³¹ Lanciers (2016) 193 n. 39, 210, 212.

2.3 Nubia in the Myth of the Sun's Eye

This chapter deals specifically with versions of the Myth of the Sun's Eye that emphasize the return of the goddess from Nubia, which were especially common in Greco-Roman temples from the First Cataract, Kom Ombo, and Nubia itself, all of which were highly influenced by the theology of Philae. In these texts, the Eye, usually associated with *Wpš.t*, arrives from Nubia to Biggeh Island (*Snm.t*, the location of the Abaton).³²

What does it mean for the Eye to come from Nubia? The texts of the myths in various temples use different geographic references to the home of the Eye: *Kns.t*,³³ *Šp.t*,³⁴ *Bwgm*,³⁵ *t³st*,³⁶ variously Punt and Nubia. Generally, these different areas come from different versions of

³² As Philae grew in prestige during the Ptolemaic and Roman period, the emphasis on the Eye's return to Philae (vs. Biggeh) became more prominent (Sethe, 1912, 14).

³³ Sethe (1912) 25 argues that references to *Kns.t* in the myth were probably taken from the legends of *Wpš.t* on Biggeh island. The term *Kns.t* is a very old term referring to the area of Nubia. In the Greco-Roman period, this refers to the area south of Philae, though possibly included areas of the First Cataract south of Elephantine in earlier times. Sethe (1912) 15. Junker states that *Kns.t* was likely located south of the second cataract and deep south into Nubia (Junker, 1911, 26.) Cf. Famine Stele I. 1. The possibly change in location from Elephantine and Philae/Biggeh may explain why certain versions of the myth Biggeh was part of *Kns.t* or why the Eye was considered to have traveled from Sehel Island to Egypt (Sethe, 1912, 15).

³⁴ *Šp.t* is used parallel to *Kns.t* and likely refers to an area southeast of Egypt, likely equal to Punt (Junker, 1911, 27-28).

³⁵ According to Junker (1911) 28, *Bwgm* is a desert region adjacent to or within *Kns.t-Šp.t*, possibly south of the second cataract or in the region of Pnubs. Sethe (1912) 8 and 22, however, disagrees, stating that the *Bwgm* refers to the desert near El Kab, an Egyptian temple north of the First Cataract. Sethe points to an inscription from Ptolemy VIII Euergetes, which suggests El Kab is near *Bwgm*. Possibly, *Bwgm* was near El Kab but was not the place of origin of Tefnut but rather somewhere she stopped during her return, like how she stopped at Biggeh island (Sethe, 1912, 23). According to Sethe (1912) 21-4, *Bwgm* is especially common in the Tefnut version of the myth, though may only be associated with Tefnut through Hathor, who has associations with the desert near El Kab and with Punt. El Kab is one of the temples that was a stopping point in the processional journey of the Nile down the river (Richter 2010).

³⁶ *T³-stj* is a general term for the southernmost Egyptian nome (*i.e.*, the location of the First Cataract) as well as the adjacent region of Lower Nubia. Cooper (2020) 154; See Vinogradov (2000) for the meaning of *T³-stj*. In Philae, Tefnut and her brother Shu are especially linked to *T³-stj*. As Sethe (1912) 8 mentions, *T³-sty* can refer to Sehel Island in the First Cataract, the home of *Wpš.t*, the flame goddess associated with the Eye. He does suggest that the term could have taken

the myth. While meaning different specific geographic areas, the designations generally refer to areas south and east of Egypt, which were considered “lands of God.”³⁷

While this linguistic analysis points to the Eastern desert, the use of the terms interchangeably suggests that the area is not meant to be precise but instead representative of the general regions southern and/or southeastern to Egypt. This is especially true in Philae, where all four terms are used. Nubia was not a monolith to the Egyptians, as is clear with the different geographic terms, but the use of the terms interchangeably suggests that the southern and southeastern corridor are boiled down to a single entity in the myth—a Nubian imaginary.

2.4 Interpretations of the Myth

There have been a number of interpretations of the myth.³⁸ Many of the elements of the myth related “to cyclically returning natural phenomenon,” especially the cycle of life, death, and rebirth; the inundation; the cycles of time (daily, monthly,³⁹ and yearly).⁴⁰ The cyclicity of the myth is prominent from its earliest stages.⁴¹ One early interpretation, which was adopted by

on a different meaning in the Ptolemaic period. From this, Junker (1911) 29 argues that the Eye’s land is southeast of Egypt, possibly the region south and east of the second cataract to the sea.

³⁷ Junker (1911) 25. cf. Rochemonteix *et al.*, Edfou II, 56. Basically Punt.

³⁸ Sethe suggested that the absence of the Eye was related to the absence of the sun from weather phenomena like clouds, storms, and fog (Sethe, 1912, 38). This view was quickly criticized and has not been adopted by scholars (see, Junker, 1917, 165 ff.). Junker (1917) 129 ff. interpreted the myth mainly as a folk myth, though he suggested some lunar interpretations (166-168).

³⁹ The myth has resonances with the Myth of the Eye of Horus, in which Horus’ eye is torn out by Seth and then brought back to him by Thoth. Resonances between the loss and restoration cycles of these two ocular myths meant that there were certain mutual influences, one of which was to link the Myth of the Sun’s Eye with monthly cycles, especially of the waxing and waning of the moon (Sethe, 1911, 36-37).

⁴⁰ Richter (2010) 157.

⁴¹ Richter (2010) 157. Such as, Pyramid Text 405: “N is that Eye of yours (=Ra’s), which is on the horns of Hathor, which turns back the years from N; N spends the night and is conceived and born every day.” *N pw irt=k tw tpt wpt hwt-hr, innt innt rnpwt hr N, sdr N iwr ms r’ nb.*

many scholars, links the movement of the solar orbit during the seasons to the myth.⁴² This interpretation is interesting because the sun appears to shift south in the transition from summer to winter, symbolizing the Eye's journey south to Nubia. Moreover, the festivals associated with the myth in Edfu, Esna, and Dendera are celebrated in the month of Tybi (or Mechi), which corresponds to the summer solstice. Therefore, the goddess would return when the day was longest.⁴³ This interpretation is problematic, argues Quack, because the myth is not about the sun itself but about the sun's Eye.⁴⁴

Another common interpretation relates the return of the goddess with the arrival of the Nile inundation of Egypt, especially concerning the heliacal rising of the star Sothis.⁴⁵ In this interpretation, proposed by Quack, the goddess is associated with Sirius, whose rising coincides with the Nile inundation. Moreover, Sothis rises in the sky right before the sun, which fits the goddess as diadem of the god, or the uraeus—the snake on his brow.⁴⁶ Furthermore, at its rising, Sothis first becomes visible in Egypt from the southeast, which is the direction from which the Eye returns.⁴⁷

⁴² This idea, first commented on by E. Schwarze, was written up by Spiegelberg (1915, 877, n.1; 1917, 2). It was adopted by Barta (1969) 77; Brunner-Traut (1980) 34; van Dijk (1983) 240; Kurth (1983) 161-163 and n4; Kurth (1982-1983) 73; Graeffe (1984) 903 ff.; Sternberg (1985) 224-228; *et al.*

⁴³ Richter (2010) 160.

⁴⁴ Quack (2002) 287: "one sun would have to play two roles at once." Quack has a similar criticism to interpretations of the goddess as the moon, since Thoth is also a lunar deity. Moreover, the moon is consistently associated with male gods in Egyptian religion (Quack, 2002, 287; Westendorf, 1989, 89).

⁴⁵ See, especially Quack (2002) 286 ff. See also Sauneron (1962) 58 ff.; Desroches-Noblecourt and Kuentz (1968) 115 ff.; Desroches-Noblecourt (1993) 28 and 42; Posener-Kriéger (1976) 447 ff; Barguet (1977) 20; Germont (1989) 227. For the heliacal rising of the Sirius linked to the inundation, see Germont (1989) 194-196, 224-233; Naguib (1990) 37-48; Kessler (1988) 183.

⁴⁶ Quack (2002) 288.

⁴⁷ Quack (2002) 289.

In support of his theory of the Eye as Sothis, Quack presents a hymn from a demotic textual version of the myth. In this hymn, the dog-ape, or baboon, a manifestation of Thoth, states:

May the sky carry a wind from the north
and may it bring the scent of Punt up with it.
May the inundation flow before it.
May the sun appear in the morning,
being a sun-disc with a large flame.
May his looks be joyful
and his rays endowed with life,
without any clouds on the way of Sothis.
May her rays be within the circle of Egypt,
may she throw them against the Nubian countries.⁴⁸

This text describes the context of the heliacal rising of Sothis, including a prolonged north wind and the visibility of the star in the sky.⁴⁹ Just the fact that the Thoth character in a text of the Myth of the Sun's Eye links the inundation with Sothis, as well as Nubia, is an important piece of evidence in supporting this interpretation.

Another factor linking the Myth of the Sun's Eye with the inundation is the colors associated with the myth. For instance, in the interpretation of the Destruction of Mankind myth, which certainly related to the Myth of the Sun's Eye,⁵⁰ Leitz suggests that Sekhmet's red beer was reminiscent of the red color of the receding Nile.⁵¹ In the Egyptian context, anger against enemies was associated with red and peace with green and blue.⁵² Thus, Quack argues that Sirius' shift from red to white-blue as it rises over time would have symbolized the emotional

⁴⁸ Mythus Leiden 16, 4-8. Quack (2002) 288-9.

⁴⁹ Quack (2002) 289. For the link between the north wind and Sothis, see Aufrère (1991) 248.

⁵⁰ Though there are arguments for keeping the myths similar. The outline of the myths as the return of a goddess from Nubia to Egypt is enough to link them both with shared interpretations around the inundation.

⁵¹ Leitz (1994) 205-6.

⁵² Quack (2002) 289.

shift of the goddess from anger to peace, which, as discussed above, was mediated through the Nile inundation. Combining Leitz and Quack's theories also produces an interesting explanation. As the Nile recedes and the red silt is more apparent, the Nile turns red representing the Eye's anger. When the Nile floods, it returns to its typical green-blue hue, symbolizing the peace of the Eye.⁵³ Moreover, many versions of the myth emphasize the Eye's procession down the Nile as she celebrates festivals, which would symbolize the inundation processing throughout Egypt.⁵⁴

The association between myth and the inundation was particularly important in the Ptolemaic period, as evidenced by the mixed associations with the Isis/Osiris autochthonous inundation theology of Philae as well as by the attempt to link the New Year's festival of inundation with the festivals of Bastet, related to the Myth of Humankind's Destruction and through this association with the Myth of the Sun's Eye, in the Canopus Decree of 238 BCE. The former will be discussed in more detail below. The latter is important for understanding the interconnections between inundation, Myth of the Sun's Eye, and Ptolemaic royal ideology, as mentioned in Chapter 2.⁵⁵

⁵³ See Oestigaard (2011).

⁵⁴ This aspect of traveling down the Nile took place in the Festival of the Wandering Goddess but later in the calendar (Tybi and Mechir).

⁵⁵ Cairo CG 22187; transl. from hieroglyphs by S. Birch. The Canopus Decree links two festivals related to the Myth of the Sun's Eye to the Ptolemaic royal ideology. The last section of the decree commemorates the death of the young Ptolemaic princess, Berenike. In a lengthy text, Berenike is declared a goddess and a special cult is created for her with specific ceremonies established. Her death happened to coincide with the day in which the daughter of Ra ascended into heaven, "when he called her "the eye of the sun and the uraeus serpent on its front" by name, and out of love to her ordered her feasts and a procession to her celebrated in the chief temples and in the sanctuaries of the first rank in the month, wherein the apotheosis of the goddess originally occurred." The month was Tybi, which, along with Mechir, was the traditional month to the festivals related to the Myth of Sun's Eye at Edfu, Esna, and Dendara (Junker, 1911, 72). This version of the myth only coincides with the versions from the temples of the First Cataract in the broadest outlines (Junker, 1911, 21). The earliest versions of the myth were found in funerary texts, so an element of the cycle of life and death may have still existed in versions of the myth by the Ptolemaic period (Richter, 2010, 157).

Another interpretation of the myth has been posited by Junker, namely around the motif of *in.tw=s* (“bringing it back”) throughout the variations of the myth, specifically the theme of the returning hero.⁵⁶ The conquering hero, Junker claims, is the god Onuris and is syncretized with Haroeris, Shu, Arensnuphis, and/or Thoth of Pnubs in the variations of the myth in Philae, who go south to “conquer” the lioness Tefnut (or other forms of the Eye) and bring her back.⁵⁷ This explanation is important especially for understanding the utility of the myth in constructing Ptolemaic imperialism in Nubia, both as great hunters of elephants⁵⁸ and in military activity. Combining this interpretation of the returning conquering hero with the interpretations of the myth as part of an inundation theology is especially powerful for Ptolemaic imperial ideology. In this interpretation, the king’s conquering of foreign lands, especially Nubia, is foundational in annually “bringing back” the Nile flood.

In a similar interpretation, Inconnu-Bocquillon develops an interpretation around the Divine Eye mythologies, utilizing Sethe’s suggestion that the Sun’s Eye mythology in the Ptolemaic period was influenced by the Eye of Horus mythology.⁵⁹ The Divine Eye mythology centers around great cosmic struggles to either gain divine royal power or to maintain it. The Myth of the Sun’s Eye, she argues, deals with the maintenance of (divine) royal power over Nubia and Upper Egypt. This would have been particularly important for the Ptolemies since they struggled with gaining and maintaining control over Nubia and Upper Egypt throughout their reign. *Contra* Junker, Inconnu-Bocquillon emphasizes the protective role the Eye in her

⁵⁶ Junker (1917); Richter (2010) 160.

⁵⁷ Junker (1917); Richter (2010) 160. In some versions, they also fight the enemies of Ra.

⁵⁸ Explored in Chapter 6.

⁵⁹ Inconnu-Bocquillon (2001) 335 ff; Sethe (1912) 36-37; Richter (2010) 161.

lioness form has in protecting Ra in both Nubia and in Egypt, which, she argues, symbolizes the Ptolemaic attempts to secure Upper Egypt.

Finally, the role of the king is important for interpreting the myth. The king is associated as various characters in the myth, each with an important role in developing Ptolemaic ideology. The king is modulated into the role of Shu, the brother of the Eye (Tefnut) in the festivals.⁶⁰ Similarly, he is portrayed as having a part in the pacification of the goddess, especially through musical instruments. For instance, on the lowest register of the west wall of Room VII of the Temple of Isis at Philae, Ptolemy II is shown playing the sistra before Isis, who is portrayed as the Eye, with a legend reading *ir(t) sššw* “playing the sistra.” An accompanying hymn (Hymn VII) is started by stating that Ptolemy II brings Isis the sistra to pacify her with them, saying “I play the sistra before your beautiful face, Isis, Giver of Life, residing in the Sacred Mound, Eye of Ra who has no equal in Heaven and on earth.”⁶¹

Mythologically, the Myth of the Sun’s Eye is directly related to the birth of the Horus-child, the king of Egypt on earth, who is closely associated with the king. The return of the Eye to Egypt is expressed as a *hieros gamos*, a sacred sexual act, which is celebrated in the orgiastic nature of the festivals about the Eye. The Horus-child is born in Pachon 1, nine months after the New Year celebration and the *hieros gamos*. The *mammisis*, or birth houses,⁶² which were particularly popular in Ptolemaic temple architecture, celebrated the birth of the Horus-child (Harpocrates), the solar child, and simultaneously the birth of the king, thus renewing the king’s rule.⁶³

⁶⁰ Junker (1911) 9.

⁶¹ Žabkar (1988) 103-114.

⁶² Desroches-Noblecourt 1990/1991

⁶³ Barrett (2011) 251; Goyon (1972). The *hieros gamos* also formed an important part of the Osirian autochthonous ecotheologies.

Finally, the king's power is linked directly to the figure of the Eye. For instance, on the First Pylon of the temple of Isis at Philae, Isis (as the bellicose Eye) says to Ptolemy XII, "I cause your strength to be as that of the raging lion, Your power like my power."⁶⁴ The link between the king, Isis, and the power of the Eye in defeating enemies and subjugating foreign lands is particularly important in constructing Ptolemaic universal royal ideology, likely explaining the proliferation of the Myth of the Sun's Eye iconography and mythology in so many Ptolemaic temples.

The Myth of the Sun's Eye has many interpretations and, just as the myth is multiform, there is likely no single accurate interpretation of the myth. Many elements, especially linked to the cycles of time, the inundation, the defeat of enemies, and the promotion of the king and royal ideology, played a part in making the myth popular during the Ptolemaic period. The fusion of these elements is explored in detail below, especially in the case of the myth's presentation at Philae.

3. The Myth of the Sun's Eye at Philae

In the great hypostyle hall of the temple of Isis at Philae, there is engraved a hieroglyphic inscription of a "so-called monograph" explicating a local version of the Myth of the Sun's Eye:⁶⁵

(This district...), it is called Per-Mereret.⁶⁶
It is the place where Shu and Tefnut stopped
when they came northwards from *Bwgm* [Nubia]
while a great flame was around her.

⁶⁴ Žabkar (1988) 66.

⁶⁵ A monograph in this context refers to "a text giving fundamental information about the specific theology and mythology of a locality (and not part of an offering scene); Quack (2002) 283.

⁶⁶ *Pr-mrr.t* is also mentioned in the Nubian nome list of Ptolemy II at the Temple of Isis at Philae (*FHN* II 112). The area meant is the First Cataract region, both Elephantine and Philae/Biggeh. *FHN* II 112 translates it as "House-of-the-margin-of-the-desert."

She burned the enemies of her father Re.
She went up into the sky 10,000 cubits and immediately became peaceful.
Then Shu said to Tefnut,
when he had seen her making a great massacre among the rebels:
“May you remain, may you remain there,
may you be risen, may you be risen there,
may you remain in Elephantine,
may you remain there,
may you be risen in Biggeh,
you who have kindled a torch against all enemies of Ptah in Memphis at the [first]
time.”⁶⁷

The text centers especially on the variation of the myth which characterizes the Eye as Tefnut with a flame aspect (*nbt.t*): “while a great flame was around her,” “she burned the enemies,” and “you who have kindled a torch against all the enemies.” As a torch, she is to defeat the enemies of Egypt, which she accomplishes specifically through her yearly return to Egypt. The First Cataract context is featured heavily in the monograph, especially as a stopping point on the Eye’s journey from Nubia to Egypt. Moreover, when Shu speaks to the Eye, he mentions the Eye remaining and being risen in both Elephantine and Biggeh, the most sacred areas of the Cataract and the places most connected with the inundation.

One interesting change in this version is that the Eye becomes peaceful through going up in the sky 10,000 cubits, instead of through the Cataract inundation waters. Quack suggests an astronomical explanation of this unusual characterization, centered around the association between the Eye, the heliacal rising of Sirius/Sothis, and the inundation.⁶⁸ This association is especially interesting in the Cataract region given the Cataract goddess Satis’ close association with (and even replacement by) Sothis. Through this association between the heliacal rising of

⁶⁷ transl: Quack (2002) 283 (hieroglyphic text); Junker (1917) 96; Inconnu-Bocquillon (2001) 53 (transliteration of text). PM VI 233 (263): Berlin photo 1297; *Wb* 3211-3213.

⁶⁸ Quack (2002)

Sothis and the inundation localized to the First Cataract, the pacification of the goddess still has resonances with the cataract waters of the Nile and the process of inundation.

As the above text shows, a localized version of the myth proliferated in the First Cataract and surrounding areas, including the temples of Lower Nubia. Texts associated with the Myth of the Sun's Eye from the temples of Philae and the temples of the Lower Nubia in Philae's theological orbit have been collected in a volume by Inconnu-Bocquillon.⁶⁹ This study shows the breadth of the myth's incorporation into the temple theology and the many variations of the myth within the temple, showing that even in one temple context the myth is multiform.

Philae has a triple role in Myth of the Sun's Eye mythology—as the border between Egypt and Nubia, as the site of purification in the waters of the Abaton, and as the site of the first festival celebrating the goddess' return. As a result of Philae's important position in the mythology, the myth features in a number of temples and decorative scenes on the island.

In Junker's reconstruction, at Philae, a procession formed to greet the goddess at the kiosk, where she landed on the barque. Then she proceeded along the sacred road to the east of the island, while she is handed the *wensheb*, wreaths, potions, and amulets. Next, she was led in procession with monkeys playing the flute and other musicians. Moreover, she is laden with gifts of flowers and gazelles. The followers rejoice as she enters the temple as Hathor, saying "Hail and welcome: Hathor is coming to her house; oh how sweet it is when she approaches."⁷⁰ Then, she travels down the Nile for nine days (or, at least, nine cult sites).

In Philae, the goddess was the heroine of the story. She was worshipped throughout the temples of Philae, but she was especially worshipped as Hathor in the Hathor temple and in the

⁶⁹ Inconnue-Bocquillon (2001).

⁷⁰ Junker (1911) 8.

songs. Elsewhere she is called Tefnut. At Philae, her form was Tefnut in the form of Hathor and was associated with the flame goddess *Wpš.t*.⁷¹

Outside of the temple of Isis, the Myth of the Sun's Eye was a prominent feature in the sacred geography of Philae. For instance, the Myth of the Sun's Eye was particularly important in the iconography of the Hathor Temple on Philae.⁷² Built during the reign of Ptolemy VI, the temple was dedicated to "Hathor Mistress of Biggeh, Eye of Ra, Mistress of Heaven, Queen of all the gods, who gives life" in the royal titulary associated with its foundation.⁷³ The temple of Hathor on Philae lies on the east side of the island and is where Hathor was thought to have arrived on the island.⁷⁴ In fact, the temple is called *p' n š*, "the House of Calling," which "confirms the role of the building in the return of the Eye of Ra to Egypt."⁷⁵ Only the entrance hall of the temple is extant and is decorated primarily in scenes of Hathor-Tefnut's arrival and the consequent jubilation, though there are a multitude of related, sometimes tangentially, mythological scenes.⁷⁶ The scenes, featuring hymns of jubilation, songs, the musical instruments, human and monkey musicians, suggest the lushness of the soundscapes of the festival celebrated at the temple, contrasting to the silence of mourning and funeral rites of Isis and Osiris at the main temple.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Junker (1911) 9.

⁷² Lyons (1896); Junker (1911) 44-47; Daumas (1968); Haeny (1985) 230-231; Inconnu-Bocquillon (2001); Ciampini *et al.* (2015).

⁷³ Ciampini *et al.* (2015) 1296-7.

⁷⁴ Junker (1911) 44.

⁷⁵ Ciampini *et al.* (2015) 1297; Daumas (1968) 3-4; Inconnu-Boquillon (2001).

⁷⁶ Junker (1911) 44.

⁷⁷ This is fully explored by Ciampini *et al.* (2015) through the extant Roman period inscriptions and iconography under Augustus.

On Philae, there was also a temple dedicated to Arensnuphis, the Nubian god associated with Shu, on the southern end of the east colonnade.⁷⁸ The earliest extant decorations of the temple are from the reign of Ptolemy IV. During the Great Revolt, the Meroitic king Arqamani continued the decoration of the temple. Following the Great Revolt, the decoration was taken up by Ptolemy V. It was expanded by Ptolemy VI and work on the temple continued through to the Roman period. In a Greek inscription associated with the temple of Arensnuphis at Philae, Arensnuphis is assimilated to the Greek hero Herakles, which may be associated to his leonine form and his association with traveling far into Nubia and bringing back the Eye.⁷⁹ There is little extant decoration in the Temple, though what is left seems to fit within the typical elements of Philaean theology featuring both the Osirian and Cataract triads.⁸⁰

One of the most important elements of the representation of the Myth of the Sun's Eye in Philae is the inclusion and modulation of the Myth to fit into the Osirian theology, namely the autochthonous inundation ecotheology. Thus, Isis is identified with the Eye and many elements of syncretism between the two mythologies occur, sometimes bending logic and meaning. Nevertheless, the two myths created a fusion that represented a complex dual theology. This fusion became especially prominent in the Ptolemaic period both inside and outside of Egypt.⁸¹

⁷⁸ For the Arensnuphis temple, see Winter (1973) 235-250; Haeny (1985) 220; Dietze (1994) 70; Inconnu-Bocquillon (2001).

⁷⁹ I. Philae I 11. Diodorus Siculus recounts that Herakles (and Dionysos) "marched throughout the whole inhabited world" and "only failed to subdue the Aithiopians, who live south of Egypt because of the piety of these men and the extreme difficulty of the undertaking" (III.2.2.3.1).

⁸⁰ Vassilika (1989).

⁸¹ Cf. Barrett (2011) Ch. 4 for the fusion of Osirian inundation theology and the Myth of the Sun's Eye in Delos.

3.1 Myth of the Sun's Eye in the Philae hymns

Certain hymns in the temple of Isis at Philae associate Isis' theological role at Philae with the Eye of Ra. For instance, in Hymn VII from the earliest Ptolemaic phase in the temple of Isis at Philae, Isis is directly called "Eye of Ra."⁸² Isis' role as the Eye of Ra is also prominent in Hymn V on the south wall of Room X of the temple.⁸³ The hymn starts off pointing towards the migration of the Isis to Philae and her relationship to Ra:

May she come to her House to join her Image,
Her radiance inundating the faces,
Like (the radiance of) Ra when he shows himself in the morning.⁸⁴

Later she is called "Mother of Horus, daughter of Ra" and "Great Royal Spouse, united with Ra," which associates Ptolemy II to Ra as "Son of Ra." Moreover, the hymn includes a particularly violent passage, which links Isis' universal rulership to the Eye's violent activities in Nubia:

Who took possession of the Two Lands,
Ruler of gods and goddesses;
Who attacks the powerful ones,
Mightier than the mighty, stronger than the strong;
Who smites millions (by) cutting off (their) heads,
Great of massacre against her Enemy.

In this role, she is called:

Mistress of flame (*nbt nsrt*) who assaults the rebels,
Who slays Apopis in an instant,
Uraeus of Ra, the Coiled One upon his head,
Who gives orders in the barque of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt.

⁸² Žabkar (1988) 107.

⁸³ Žabkar (1988) 55-75.

⁸⁴ A similar opening can be found in Hymn VI, also on the south wall of Room X: "Come to the Palace, you who make gods and men live, / (You) to whose Ka Heh stretches himself up, / Whom Ra has raised upon his head, / Who shines as the Diadem on his forehead." (Žabkar, 1988, 80-81). See below.

These references link her specifically to the Eye in the Myth of the Sun's Eye, from her migration to Philae, her relationship as the daughter and consort of Ra, her violent actions against her enemies, her association with the mistress of flame and the Uraeus of Ra, and her ultimate role in controlling the royal solar barque. However, the hymn also has important features of the Osirian myth. For instance, she “protects her brother Osiris” and is the “Mother of Horus.” This suggests a specific policy of combining the two major theologies of Philae, that of the Osirian cycle and of the Myth of the Sun's Eye.⁸⁵ The mixture is rather sophisticated, in that it links Isis' role as protector of her brother Osiris with her role as protector of Ra and with her violent activities in Nubia. Through this mixture, the myth becomes an even more powerful tool for royal ideology—any violence (*i.e.*, military activity) outside of Egypt, especially in Nubia, is specifically linked to the protection of both Osiris and Ra and, thus, to the protection of Egypt.

This royal ideology is on prominent display on the First Pylon of Philae, which was decorated under Ptolemy XII.⁸⁶ On both towers of the pylon, Ptolemy XII is shown smiting his enemies before the gods.⁸⁷ On the western tower, which shows him smiting in front of Isis, Hathor, and Ha, Isis is called the “sun-goddess” and is identified with “Sekhmet, the fiery goddess,” who is most prominently the lioness goddess who ravages Nubia. Meanwhile, Hathor says she is the one who “grasps the Nubians (*Nḥsyw*) by their topknots,” linking Hathor and Isis together in their shared role as Eye, though giving Hathor precedence specifically over Nubia,

⁸⁵ Žabkar (1988) 59.

⁸⁶ Žabkar (1988) 63-4.

⁸⁷ The pylon itself may have been acting as a powerful border of the temple, using the king smiting his enemies in front of the gods as an apotropaic protection against enemies, both real and mythic, from entering the temple. In response, this powerful temple with its huge protective pylons and spiritual protection may have been a symbol of protection against the border itself (cf. Žabkar, 1988, 65).

whereas, as seen below, Isis has a universal quality.⁸⁸ In the inscription, Isis speaks about Ptolemy XII's vanquishing of the rebels and enemies with great bellicosity, stating, "I cause your strength to be as that of the raging lion, Your power like my power." In this way, she casts Ptolemy XII himself in the role of Eye, as raging lion against his enemies and protector of Egypt. As a result of his actions, Isis places "North and South under your soles, West and East in obeisance (to you)." Thus, through the king's close relationship to Isis as Eye of the Sun, he gains universal kingship. Through the association with Isis, the Myth of the Sun's Eye becomes a universal mythology, not one just about the border between Egypt and Nubia. In fact, the First Cataract border synecdochally comes to symbolize all external borders of Egypt. The Myth of the Sun's Eye, then, points to an externality in the royal ideology, namely imperialism driven by universal royal ideology.

3.2 Mobility in the Hymns to Isis at Philae

Isis has a particular type of mobility in the Philae hymns, specifically those containing themes from the Myth of the Sun's Eye. Two of the hymns studied by Žabkar (Hymns V and VI) feature a call to the goddess to come to her image and her temple, suggesting that she is not currently present in the temple at the beginning of the hymn. The hymns, which were performed for Isis by King Ptolemy II, are thus part of a ritual process to return the goddess, linking the motion of the goddess to the Myth of the Sun's Eye.

The invocation of Isis is a common feature in Egyptian hymns, which can be found in the Pharaonic period. Typically, these invocations were less about worshipping the goddess than for asking her for help when called upon.⁸⁹ This feature is particularly present in the demotic ostraca

⁸⁸ Žabkar (1988) 66.

⁸⁹ Kockelmann (2009) 39.

recording the invocations to the goddess by Hor, a minor priest of Isis, from the first half of the second c. BCE: “Come to me, mistress(?), lady of the chapel, lady of uraeus, lady of the two lands, Isis the great, god’s mother, great goddess...”.⁹⁰ Similarly in Theban demotic graffito: “Come to me Isis, lady of the uraeus!”⁹¹

The situation in the Philae hymns is different. These invocations are not about asking for help but for worshipping the goddess at a set time and festival context. Invocations of this sort are common in Egyptian cult worship, where the deity must appear in the temple, imbuing life into the cult statues of the temple. This occurred both daily and occasionally for festivals. While invocations relating to the motion of the goddess coming to the worshipper were not uncommon in Egyptian religion, the use of invocation in these two hymns to Isis are unique among the published hymns from the temple of Isis at Philae.

To understand the full extent of the meaning of the hymns, it is also important to understand their location in the temple and in the cultic festival.⁹² According to Žabkar’s reconstruction, the two hymns were arranged on either side of the doorway on the south wall of Room X of the Temple of Isis at Philae. Hymn V was arranged vertically on the right, west jamb of the inner doorway, and Hymn VI was arranged vertically on the left, east jamb. Above the lintel and downward along the outer border of the two jambs of the same doorway were two building inscriptions, which relate the details of the consecration of the temple (discussed above in context of Ptolemy II’s consecration of the temple after his Nubian campaign).⁹³ Given the prominent position in the temple and the architectural relationship with the inscriptions related to

⁹⁰ O. Hor. 10 in Kockelmann (2009) 10.

⁹¹ Theban Graffito 3156 in Kockelmann (2009) 20.

⁹² Žabkar (1988) 85-89.

⁹³ Žabkar (1988) 89.

the consecration of the temple, Žabkar argues that the hymns were likely part of the Consecration Rite of the temple as well as the subsequent yearly reconsecration rites of the temple.⁹⁴ The invocation of Isis was the center of the “most significant point of the Consecration Rite,” likely the finale of the ceremony.⁹⁵

These centerpiece hymns are themselves kinopolitical. The *kino*- elements are prominent in the hymns, which both begin with a similar invocation. Hymn V starts, “May she come to her House to join her Image” (*Ī.t r pr.s r hnm sšmw.s*) and Hymn VI starts, “Come to the Palace” (*Mi.t r ḥt*).⁹⁶ Using forms of the verb *ii* (“to come”), which can also mean “to return, to come back” or have a deictic meaning “to come here,” a specific movement is implied. The *political* aspect is best understood in where Isis might be coming from and to whom she is coming. While Isis is a universal goddess who exists everywhere, the building inscription next to the hymns with the consecration texts point specifically to Isis being in Nubia, where she “repels the vile Iuntiu (Nubians) from the Shores of Horus.”⁹⁷ When first inscribed, this text referred to Ptolemy II’s military action in Nubia, which led to the consecration of the temple as a memorial. Through reconsecration ceremonies, Isis’ and the Ptolemaic king’s joint effort in conquering the Nubians would be revisited as a yearly ritual of conquest. The temple stands as a perpetual reminder of the Nubian’s subordination to the Ptolemies, and the yearly festival was a specific moment in time that celebrated this conquest. Linking Isis with her role as Eye of Ra to this action shows that the Myth of the Sun’s Eye was celebrated daily and yearly in the temple and the proliferation of the myth throughout the temples of the Ptolemaic period points to the importance

⁹⁴ Žabkar (1988) 88-89.

⁹⁵ Žabkar (1988) 89.

⁹⁶ *Ī.t* is the third-person singular old perfective in exclamatory use. Whereas *Mi.t* is the imperative form of the same verb (*ii*). See Žabkar (1988) 168, n. 4 for the form of *Ī.t*.

⁹⁷ Žabkar (1988) 65.

of the conquest of Nubia and the securing of the southern border for the universal royal ideology of the Ptolemies.

The final aspect to this is the “right time;” when was this festival and how does that link to Ptolemaic royal ideology? The answer to this can be found in Hymn VIII, which links the worship of Isis as the Eye and in her role in the autochthonous inundation ecotheology to the New Year Festival, which was also linked to both the pacification of the Eye and the inundation in Hymn VII. The legends surrounding the image of Isis beside Hymn VIII present a complete proclamation of universal royal ideology: Isis states to Ptolemy II: “I have given you all flat lands and all foreign lands. I have given you the kingship of Ra in heaven.” Ptolemy is not only the conqueror of the world but also of heaven, a completely universal kingship. Interestingly, this final hymn presents the coming of Ptolemy to the temple where Isis is: “Son of Ra, Ptolemy, has come before you, Lady of Life / On this day on which you have gloriously appeared” (*ii.n sʹ Rʹ Ptlwmys hr.t nb(t) ʹnh / M hrw pn nfr hʹ.n.t im.f*) and “Behold, Ptolemy has come before you (*Mt Ptlwmys ii hr.t*).”⁹⁸ The first example shows the important congruence of time and motion—Ptolemy has come on the same day as Isis, showing that time is itself an important bordering technology and aspect of control.

4. Constructing the Border with the Myth of the Sun’s Eye

At the heart of the Myth of the Sun’s Eye is the goddess crossing the mytho-geopolitical border between the southern lands (*i.e.*, Nubia) and Egypt. The First Cataract border is the center of the Myth of the Sun’s Eye. The inundation waters at the Abaton on Biggeh Island, Osiris’ burial place, serves as both the place and the process of transformation—where and how the Eye transforms from Tefnut the lioness into Hathor the beautiful woman. Hathor is called “great of

⁹⁸ Žabkar (1988) 118-119.

manifestation in Biggeh” in the temple of Isis at Philae, referencing her epiphany in Biggeh.⁹⁹ Her manifestation is important because it points to a change in identity at the border; she does not just come to Biggeh, she appears there through her transformation in the inundation waters at the border. Through this place-process synthesis, the border is revealed as the process of the inundation localized at the First Cataract.

When the Eye transgresses the border between Egypt and Nubia, she also transgresses a range of conceptual borders, illustrating the fluidity of identity for border crossers. The inundation waters of the First Cataract border, which symbolize the androgynous potentiality of the waters of the abyss, are both a place and a process for the Eye’s transformations from animal to human; from angry to peaceful; from Nubia to Egypt; and from the object of sadness to an object of joyousness for the inhabitants of Egypt. At the exact moment that she is in the inundation waters, she takes on both the indeterminacy and the potentiality of the abyss of Nun. Through the transgression of these borders, she becomes a creative force, resulting in the onset of the inundation.

4.1 The Border in Motion

The Myth of the Sun’s Eye is ultimately a myth about cycles and borders. To understand how the myth constructs the border, the motion of the myth, its cycles, and its circulations must be contextualized. Moreover, circulations in the myth model the imperial movements and circulations within the Ptolemaic Dodekaschoinos, the borderland region between the First and Second Cataracts. This “kinopolitics” of the myth and the Ptolemaic empire construct the border through a “process of circulation.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Žabkar (1988) 84, 176 n. 52.

¹⁰⁰ Nail (2016) 7.

Kinopolitics is a term coined by Thomas Nail in his transhistorical theoretical works on migrants and borders.¹⁰¹ The term deals with the politics of motion, especially social motion and “their forms of circulation,” that construct borders.¹⁰² In other words, borders are not static but are made of up of the processes of their construction or maintenance. As Nail clarifies, “the conceptual basis of circulation is that something goes out and then comes back in again and again. It is a continuum.”¹⁰³ For instance, in the Myth of the Sun’s Eye, the Eye leaves Egypt transforming into a lioness. She then circulates in Nubia, killing the enemies of Ra. Finally, she returns (or is returned), where she is transformed back into a woman in the inundation waters at the First Cataract border. Each time this cycle continues, each time it is celebrated in a festival, and each time it is referenced in iconography, literature, and text, the border is constructed and maintained as is the ideology that the subjugation of Nubia is foundational to Egypt’s power. Thus, Nail’s theory of kinopolitical circulation can also be a useful model for analyzing the mythologies of bordering, especially in understanding the importance of motion and migration in constructing the border.

Nail identifies three core concepts in kinopolitical analysis: flow, junction, and circulation. If flow, junction, and circulation are the foundation for constructing the border and/or the process of bordering, then the identification of these elements in the Myth of the Sun’s Eye can elucidate a model for constructing the border/bordering that functioned in the Ptolemaic period. First, understanding the border in the myth relies on identifying the migrant, which Nail argues is “the political force of movement.”¹⁰⁴ The migrant in the myth is the Eye herself, whose

¹⁰¹ Nail (2015) and (2016).

¹⁰² Nail (2016) 21.

¹⁰³ Nail (2016) 29.

¹⁰⁴ Nail (2016) 11.

motion is centripetally compelled from Nubia to the border at the First Cataract, which is the flow. The First Cataract border, both the rushing waters of inundation at the Abaton and the festivals performed there, is the junction, the momentary stasis that restricts flow. The circulation is predicated on the Eye's eventual return to Nubia. Through the process of circulation, the frontier is created not as bounded by a static wall but as "the foremost part of the border's process of continual motion."¹⁰⁵

4.2 Ptolemaic Circulation in the Borderlands

The Myth of the Sun's Eye is a mythological model for Ptolemaic kinopolitical circulation in the Nubian-Egyptian borderlands, called the Dodekaschoinos.¹⁰⁶ There were three types of kinopolitical circulation in the Dodekaschionos borderlands in the Ptolemaic period—military, religious/temple, and administrative,¹⁰⁷ each constructing the limit of Ptolemaic circulation in the Nubian borderlands at the First Cataract. The relationship between this circulation and the mythological circulation of the Myth of the Sun's Eye shows that the myth was an important bordering ideology in the temples of the borderlands, constructing the Ptolemaic border outside of Egypt.

4.2.1 Ptolemaic Military Circulation

The Dodekaschoinos, which Williams calls a "marchland," had military importance in the Ptolemaic period, starting with Ptolemy II's Nubian campaign.¹⁰⁸ This campaign is briefly

¹⁰⁵ Nail (2016) 40.

¹⁰⁶ The Dodekaschoinos (the twelve *schoinoi* land) stretched along the Nile valley about seventy-five miles from the First Cataract to Hieria Sykaminos, modern Maharraqa (Török, 2009, 384-90). The region had a long history of contestation as well as religious-cultural incorporation; See Török (2009) and Williams's (2010 review).

¹⁰⁷ The circulation of ethnographers and other Ptolemaic agents is discussed in the next chapter.

¹⁰⁸ Williams (2010) 634. For Ptolemy II's Nubian campaign, see Theocritus, Id. 17.87; SB I 5111, III 6134 (*FHN* II 97); Diodorus 1.37.5, quoting Agatharchides, Book 1 of whose *On the Erythraean Sea* is thought to cover the campaign (Burstein, 1989).

mentioned by the Hellenistic Greek poet Theocritus: “he [Ptolemy II] cut off [a part]...of the dark-skinned Ethiopians.”¹⁰⁹ Diodorus Siculus, quoting Agatharchides, makes an even grander claim that Ptolemy II was the first Greek to have penetrated Aithiopia, when he brought a Greek army on expedition to Aithiopia.¹¹⁰ One of the only other pieces of evidence available for this period comes from a papyrus, which is dated through paleography to the early 3rd c. BCE. Found in Elephantine, the papyrus is a letter to a Ptolemaic king (presumably Ptolemy II) reporting a siege of (presumably of the First Cataract) by the Aithiopians and the construction of defenses.¹¹¹ While skirmishes such as these may have been common, the war was not necessarily defensive, but instead had an ideological and economic importance, especially around a joint Hellenistic and Egyptian universal ruler ideology, elephant hunting, and gold mining.¹¹²

4.2.2 Ptolemaic Religious Circulation

Ptolemy II commemorated his conquest of Nubia and accession of Lower Nubia by building the temple of Isis at Philae. This is specifically mentioned in a building inscription from the reign of Ptolemy II that surmounts the lintel and ran down the outer borders of the door jambs of the south wall of Room X in the temple of Isis at Philae. On the right, the inscription states that Ptolemy “has made a memorial for his mother Isis, Giver of Life, Lady of Philae, august and mighty, Mistress of the Two Shrines, who repels the vile Iuntiu (Nubians) from the

¹⁰⁹ Theocritus, *Idylls*, 17.87: καὶ μὴν...ἀποτέμενεται... κελαινῶν τ’ Αἰθιοπῶν. This poem was written before Arsinoe II’s death in 270 BCE.

¹¹⁰ Diodorus Siculus 1.37.5. Diodorus exaggerates here. Greeks had certainly traveled to Aithiopia before Ptolemy II’s campaign. For instance, Greek mercenaries participated in Psammetik II’s Nubian campaign in 593 BCE and left graffiti on the statues of Ramses II at Abu Simbel (Burstein’s commentary on *FGrH* 86; Meiggs and Lewis, *GHI* 7).

¹¹¹ SB I 5111, III 6134 (*FHN* II 97)

¹¹² See Török’s discussion of *FHN* II 97 (pp.537-538). Török (1980) points to the northern incursion of Amanislo to the Second Cataract as a possible reason for Ptolemy II’s advance into Nubia (78).

Shores of Horus, building for her a Sanctuary.”¹¹³ This inscription shows that Ptolemy II linked his successes in Nubia, which were memorialized in the temple and its festivals specifically to Isis. This had great importance for Ptolemaic universal royal ideology. The temple of Isis at Philae was the first major temple to Isis and provided an early opportunity for the Ptolemies to lay out a full Isis theology. The choice for it to link a universal royal ideology with Isis at the moment of Ptolemy II’s great conquest of Nubia suggests the importance of Ptolemy II’s imperial project in Nubia. Another religious outcome of Ptolemy II’s conquest of Nubia was that the Dodekaschoinos borderlands, though Ptolemy claimed it to be the Triakontaschoinos, was dedicated to Isis at Philae,¹¹⁴ which was confirmed several times throughout the Ptolemaic period.¹¹⁵

4.2.3 Ptolemaic Administrative Circulation

The evidence for Ptolemaic control and administration of the Dodekaschoinos is sparse. The dedication of the Dodekaschoinos to Isis was commemorated through an inscription in the temple of Isis at Philae showing the Lower and Upper Nubian nomes bringing tribute to Isis, which suggests a tax imposed on the region.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, the area held special status as a borderland (*tʒš*), which granted certain privileges, such as advantageous tax status, to the

¹¹³ Žabkar (1988) 65.

¹¹⁴ cf. the *Famine Stele*, which claimed the land for the temple of Khnum at Elephantine.

¹¹⁵ Török (1980) 76. By Ptolemy II Philadelphos, Ptolemy VI Philometor, Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II, Ptolemy IX Soter II, the Meroitic king Arqamani, and the Roman emperors Augustus and Tiberius.

¹¹⁶ *Urk.* II 12.27; *FHN* II 112. Török (2009) 386-387; Žabkar (1988) 65.

inhabitants of the region.¹¹⁷ There is evidence that the Ptolemies garrisoned Middle Kingdom frontier forts of Buhen and Mirgissa near the Second Cataract.¹¹⁸

The administration of the Dodekaschoinos seemed to be most interested in organizing the military operations and the donation of the Dodekaschionos and its goods to the temple of Isis at Philae. From the reign of Ptolemy V on, the Dodekaschoinos belonged to the *strategos* (governor) of the Thebaid, who oversaw both the army and the civil administration.¹¹⁹ An important inscription for understanding the administration of the Dodekaschoinos concerns a Herodes of Pergamon, the son of Demophon, who was the *phrourarchos* (commander of the garrison at Syene) among other roles.¹²⁰ For instance, the inscription tells of the foundation of two cities in Lower Nubia—Philometoris and Kleopatra—under Herodes' *strategos* Boethos in approximately 152-145 BCE.¹²¹ Moreover, it presents Herodes, an important Ptolemaic military and administrative agent, as prominent in the religious life of the First Cataract as “prophet of Chnoubis and chief *stolistes* of the temples in Elephantine [and Abaton] and Philae.”¹²² Herodes would continue his career in the area, eventually replacing Boethos to become the chief bodyguard and the *strategos* of the region himself. He maintained his close relationship to the religious life of the First Cataract, as evidenced by the inscribed stele he dedicated with the

¹¹⁷ The area was called *tš* (“borderland”) in Ptolemy IV’s dedication text instead of the more normal *šht* (“land”). Török (2009) 388. For tax status, see Török (2009) 389; Clarysse and Thompson (2006) 154 ff.; Clarysse (1994) 69-77.

¹¹⁸ Burstein (1993) 43; Török (2009) 387. At Buhen, Greek graffiti has been found in the Nubian king Taharqo’s South Temple (Masson, 1976, 310-313); For the fort at Mirgissa, see Le Rider (1969) 28-35.

¹¹⁹ Locher (1999) 319. Török (2009) 404-405. From 187-170 BCE, the *strategos* was a certain Sokrates; from 163-137 BCE, the *strategos* was Boethos, son of Nikostratos.

¹²⁰ OGIS 111. Fischer-Bovet (2014) 335-336.

¹²¹ Cohen (2006) 347. Boethos founded a third city, called Euergetis in 132 BCE; P. UB Trier S 135-01 01(a)=SB XXIV15974.

¹²² OGIS 111.

basilistae of the cataract island Setis (Sehel Island), who worshipped a number of Cataract deities.¹²³

The control of the Dodekaschoinos had multiple results. First, it curbed Nubian northern expansion and as a result limited Upper Egyptian nationalists' access to aid from the Nubians against Ptolemaic rule.¹²⁴ This would last for around seventy years, until the Great Revolt. The resulting peace also opened access to the gold mines of Wadi Allaqi and to elephant hunting throughout the region.

4.2.4 Nubian Circulation in the Borderlands

The Ptolemaic agents and religious ideology were not the only ones circulating through this region and constructing the border through motion. For instance, Nubian deities, predominantly Arensnuphis and Mandulis, became featured in the First Cataract, including temples constructed for each on Philae, which suggests a circulation northward to the border. While Mandulis was a god of the peoples of the Eastern Desert, Arensnuphis was a prominent god worshipped in the kingdom of Kush to the south. The latter was especially related to the Myth of the Sun's Eye, being syncretized with Shu, the brother of the Eye. Not only deities circulated northwards in the religious context, people also circulated northward from Nubia. One group of people included Nubian singers and dancers who participated in the festivals celebrating the return of the Eye.¹²⁵

Another, more politically significant, group of northward circulators were the Meroitic kings who traveled to the First Cataract, when it was held under siege during the Great Revolt

¹²³ OGIS 130.

¹²⁴ Török (2009) 384.

¹²⁵ Darnell (1995); Ashby (2018).

(207/6—186 BCE).¹²⁶ During this period, the Meroitic kings supported the Upper Egyptian rebels with troops and, in return, seemed to have received control over Lower Nubia.¹²⁷ This control culminated in 196/5 BCE, when Meroitic troops arrived to support the rebel cause and took Syene/Aswan, which they held until March 7, 189 BCE.¹²⁸ The final battle occurred likely at Syene on August 27, 186 BCE, concluding in Ptolemaic victory, which was commemorated with a bilingual (hieroglyphic and demotic Egyptian) stele in front of the Mammisi at Philae:¹²⁹

He (Eumonos) has campaigned in South-land (Upper Egypt), in the district of Dominion (Thebes), against the rebel, the enemy of the gods (Harronophris), now, the son of the enemy (leader) is dead, together with the band of Nubians who had joined him; he (Eumenos) has slaughtered them and seized that insurgent alive.¹³⁰

There is little evidence for Nubian trips traveling farther north than the First Cataract, which again suggests a circulation of migration through the Dodekaschoinos anchored at the First Cataract border.

During the Great Revolt, when the Dodekaschoinos was held by the Nubians, there was a period of significant temple building, which was focused during the rule of Meroitic kings Arqamani, often referred to as Ergamenes II, and his successor Adikhalamani.¹³¹ Arqamani's building activities included a continuation of temples started by Ptolemy IV, including the temples of Arensnuphis on Philae, Mandulis at Kalabsha, and Thoth at Pselkis/Dakka.¹³²

¹²⁶ For the Great Revolt, see Préaux (1978) 389-398; Peremans (1978); Clarysse (1978); Dunand (1983); Pestman (1995); McGing (1997); Vélisse (2004); Clarysse (2004); Török (2009) 391-400; O'Neil (2012); Fischer-Bovet (2014) 92-93; Johstono (2016); Manning and Ludlow (2017); Manning *et al.* (2017). Polybius 5.107; Strabo 17.1.53.

¹²⁷ Török (2009) 392.

¹²⁸ Török (2009) 392; cf. Bresciani and Pernigotti (1978) 141, No. 43. Huss (2001) 509 ff. In 189 BCE, the Upper Egyptian rebels fled to Nubia.

¹²⁹ Török (2009) 392; Pestman (1995) 109, 120. For the stele: *Urk.* II 217, 230; *FHN* II 134.

¹³⁰ *FHN* II 134, translated from the hieroglyphic version, pp. 602-603.

¹³¹ Török (2009) 393.

¹³² Török (2009) 394.

Adikhalamani's building was more modest, including a shrine to Amun at Debod, though he was shown on a stele on Philae offering to Osiris and Isis. This stele has an interesting link to the Myth of the Sun's Eye, since Osiris is called the Lord of *Hnt-tʿ* (Fore-land), along with designations of Lord of Philae and the Abaton. *Hnt-tʿ* is both the domain of Khnum and one of the mytho-geographic designations for Nubia in the Myth of the Sun's Eye.¹³³

4.2.5 The Myth of the Sun's Eye in Borderland Temples

The Ptolemaic and Meroitic kings also built temples and decorated existing temples in the Dodekaschoinos region, including to Thoth of Pnubs at Pselkis/Dakka and Mandulis at Talmis/Kalabsha.¹³⁴ Along with a prominently featuring Isis of Philae ideology, these temples had significant allusions to the Myth of the Sun's Eye.¹³⁵ The temples were especially reliant on the theologies of Philae, suggesting a process of circulation of people and ideas anchored at Philae.¹³⁶ The major characters are found in the Nubian forms—Tefnut, Arensnuphis, and Thoth—but are mentioned as lords of Philae and the Abaton not of the Nubian temple.¹³⁷ They do not feature local color and seem to be direct copies from Philae.¹³⁸

The only exception is Dakka, because the temple at Dakka was dedicated to Thoth of Pnubs, whose role in the myth was featured heavily. Even so, Philae is prominent in the inscriptions of the temple at Dakka. For instance, Tefnut is “Lady of Philae,”¹³⁹ and Hymn V

¹³³ Török (2009) 394. Cf. Smith (1984) 1082-1087.

¹³⁴ Török (2009) 388. Furthermore, one of the most significant cases of interaction of Ptolemaic priests from Philae and Nubian priests can be found in the texts, iconography, and architecture of Musawwarat es Sufra; Hintze (1962); Hallof (2005); Török (2009) 395-396.

¹³⁵ Junker (1911) 47 ff; Inconnu-Bocquillon (2001).

¹³⁶ Inconnu-Bocquillon (2001) 15.

¹³⁷ Junker (1911) 48.

¹³⁸ This Philae version of the myth is also prominent in Kom Ombo to the north (Junker, 1911, 10).

¹³⁹ Junker (1911) 10, 48, 52.

from the temple of Isis at Philae,¹⁴⁰ which specifically deals with Isis and the Myth of the Sun's Eye, is reedited in the temple of Dakka. In Dakka, the hymn had a different cultic purpose and was inscribed with an image of Arqamani, the Meroitic king, instead of Ptolemy II. While the temple was influenced by the theology of Philae, it was variously held by the Meroitic kings and the Ptolemaic kings.

When the Ptolemies restored control over the Dodekaschoinos, they continued to decorate the temples, for instance rededicating the temple of Debod to Isis.¹⁴¹ It does not seem that the myth was adapted into Nubian local custom or had its own local version, but instead was part of the Ptolemaic (and later Roman) imperial project of building and decorating temples in the Dodekaschoinos. This suggests the circulation of artisans, temple builders, and priests from Philae throughout the Dodekaschoinos.¹⁴² It also suggests that this myth was important for establishing the Ptolemaic imperial control in Lower Nubia. Thus, the circulation of religious ideology, syncretized mythology, priests (including in the guise of soldiers, such as in the case of Herodes and Petiesi, see below), and temple artisans constructed and anchored the First Cataract border.

4.3 The Case Study of Petiesi (Aswan 1057)

As discussed above, military, religious, and administrative circulations in the Dodekaschoinos borderlands was a feature of Ptolemaic construction of the First Cataract border. This was also present among the Egyptian population, which can be seen in a late Ptolemaic bilingual (hieroglyphic and demotic Egyptian) funerary stele from Aswan, which relates the life,

¹⁴⁰ Žabkar (1988) 74.

¹⁴¹ Török (2009) 400.

¹⁴² cf. Hallof (2005) on the influence of Philae on Musawwarat es Sufra.

official roles, and donations of a certain Petiesi, a soldier and priest of Isis at Philae.¹⁴³ As a soldier, Petiesi served as a “*kalasiris* (*gl-šr*) of Elephantine” and “standard-bearer (*fy-stne*) before (the) Nome at the head of the five companies,” a position of high rank.¹⁴⁴ During his time in the military, he made ten voyages to Nubia during the reign of four pharaohs.¹⁴⁵ During one of these campaigns, Petiesi seems to have found himself saved from mortal peril, whether natural disaster or battle: “The gods rescued me from (the wrath of) their lightning, and brought me home to my home-town because of the works of piety which I performed.”¹⁴⁶ This stele shows that there were frequent campaigns in Nubia, even though, as Ray suggests, the “political history of Nubia in the late second and first centuries BC was not eventful.”¹⁴⁷

The stele also shows how entangled soldiers were in the religious and administrative situation of the First Cataract and Dodekaschoinos. Petiesi is called the prophet of the house of Khnum and Isis, which likely means for the temples of Isis and Khnum on Philae but could also

¹⁴³ Aswan 1057. See Ray (1987) and (1989). The dating is debatable, likely dating to the late Ptolemaic or early Roman period. Ray (1987) speculates on the identity of the four pharaohs Petiesi worked under, suggesting Ptolemy VI, Ptolemy VIII, and Eupator and Neos Philopator; or the combinations during the war of Ptolemy Soter II and Alexander II; or Ptolemy Auletes, Berenike IV, Cleopatra VII, and Augustus. This is all speculation based on four pharaohs ruling during a forty-year career.

¹⁴⁴ Aswan 1057, demotic text, l. 1 (Ray, 1987, 175). The *kalasiris* (*gl-šr*, *καλασίριες*) is one of the two categories of *machimoi* (μάχιμοι), or Egyptian warriors, according to Herodotus (2.165-166). It was a common military designation, though the meaning is debated. For more about *kalasiris*, see Fischer-Bovet (2013). The demotic *stn(e)* (σημεῖον) was typically a unit of 256 soldiers, which included an officer with the designation *semeiophoros* or standard bearer (*fʿy-stn*, *σημειοφόρος*). The standard-bearer was the second most important officer in the unit (Vandorpe, 2014, 127). For more on the *semeion* and standard-bearer, see Vandorpe (2014).

¹⁴⁵ Aswan 1057, demotic text, l. 4 (Ray, 1989, 244). Ray changes his reading of the line from 1987 to 1989.

¹⁴⁶ Aswan 1057, demotic text, 1.5 (Ray, 1987, 176).

¹⁴⁷ Ray (1987) 180. If Petiesi’s career was active over thirty to forty years, ten campaigns in Nubia suggests a rate of a campaign every three to four years. Furthermore, Petiesi may not have joined every campaign into the borderlands.

mean the temple of Khnum on Elephantine.¹⁴⁸ In his role of standard-bearer of the Nome and priest, he was said to have “served the gods and goddesses in the Nome...and in all the temples within it.”¹⁴⁹ While there is a lacuna in the hieroglyphic text, the demotic text suggests that he served both the gods and goddesses of the Nome and of Nubia.¹⁵⁰ This may suggest that Petiesi performed priestly duties in both the First Cataract and in Nubia. Possibly because of his role as priest and his prominent role in the local army, Petiesi is also called “acquaintance of the king’s house in Nubia.”¹⁵¹ This role is unparalleled but seems to suggest some relationship to the administration of Nubia, though likely subordinate to governor of the region.¹⁵²

Petiesi’s career exemplifies the circulation of Ptolemaic agents in the control of Nubia, both in military, religion, and administration. It also points towards the outcomes of these circulations. Petiesi’s stele shows activities that accumulated bordering practices at the First Cataract. First, his military activities were centered around Elephantine and the Nome; Petiesi had a home in the garrison of the First Cataract, as revealed by his position as *kalasiris* of Elephantine. Added to this were his priestly positions in various temples in the First Cataract.

Petiesi’s life was one of circulation, of migrating away from the border and returning home. Though this circulation, he (and his fellow Ptolemaic agents) assisted in constructing the border at the First Cataract through the anchoring of his circulations via his domicile, his offerings to the temple, and his final resting place. Petiesi made his home at the First Cataract border, as evidenced by the statement that the gods “brought me to my home-town” during the

¹⁴⁸ Ray (1987) 177-8. It is debatable because he was the *kalisiris* of Elephantine and he gave donations to Elephantine.

¹⁴⁹ Aswan 1057, hieroglyphic text, 1.5 (Ray, 1987, 172).

¹⁵⁰ Aswan 1057, demotic text, 1.1-2 (Ray, 1987, 176).

¹⁵¹ Aswan 1057, hieroglyphic text, 1.5-6; Ray, 1987, 172.

¹⁵² Ray (1987) 178.

crisis during one of his campaigns in Nubia.¹⁵³ When he returned from his campaigns, he was not empty handed. Enriched through his military, religious, and administrative activities, Petiesi made large-scale donations to the temples of the First Cataract: he gave “one-tenth” to the gods, which included a harp of gold for both Elephantine and Philae, a bed of ebony for the house-of-appeal of Hathor, a gilded (doorway) for the Nome, and a door bolt for the temple of Philae.¹⁵⁴ Through Petiesi’s circulation of the borderlands, he brought back wealth, which he used to construct the border as a marked out space. Finally, his migrations come to an end upon his death. In this stasis, he is buried and the bilingual stele commemorating his movements through life is erected, anchoring his migration to the First Cataract, and further building the border in death.¹⁵⁵

4.4 Time as a Bordering Technology

The control of time is itself a border technology that “both divides and prescribes the passage of social time, social space, and social activities.”¹⁵⁶ As seen in the above example, the congruence of time and motion between the king, deity, and presumably other celebrants was important in the celebration of the festival, particularly the New Year’s Festival. As explored in Chapter 2, the confluence of the autochthonous ecotheology, the festival of the Myth of the Sun’s Eye, and the celebration of the ruling Ptolemaic couple with the celebration of the New Year’s Festival was a major feature of Ptolemy III’s ideological program in the Canopus Decree of 238 BCE. It was important that time was measured and measured correctly and that the festivals were celebrated in the right manner and at the right time, especially in that it should

¹⁵³ Aswan 1057, demotic text, l.5; Ray, 1987 176.

¹⁵⁴ Aswan 1057, demotic text, l.4, 6-8; Ray, 1987, 176.

¹⁵⁵ The stele was found on the island of El-Hesa and associated with graves 98 and 100 in cemetery 3. The island was the burial place for the priests of Isis in Philae; Ray (1987) 177.

¹⁵⁶ Nail (2016) 104.

coincide with the heliacal rising of Sothis, which resulted in the commencement of the Nile inundation.¹⁵⁷

Not unexpectedly, the accurate measurement of time was a prominent feature in the commemoration of the Myth of the Sun's Eye, especially in the offerings of the temple.¹⁵⁸ The most important symbol of the control of time in the Myth of the Sun's Eye is the proliferation of the *wensheb*, one of the most important ritual objects.¹⁵⁹ An object closely associated with Thoth was given to the Eye to pacify her and convince her to come back to Egypt. On the walls of the temple, the *wensheb* was a common offering dedicated by the king. The *wensheb* (*wnšb*) is a baboon figure, which symbolized Thoth's role in ordering time, especially cycles of day and night through hourly timekeeping.¹⁶⁰ Often called a *clepsydra*, the Greek word for the object, the object was a water clock, which was important in hourly timekeeping during the night, a mythologically dangerous time that required protection.¹⁶¹

The figure of Thoth linked the hourly timekeeping to yearly timekeeping in his role in bringing the Eye back from Nubia at the right time, namely the time of the inundation. Through offerings of the *wensheb*, the Eye deities were reminded of their duty in returning to Egypt,

¹⁵⁷ Closely linked to this increased obsession with measuring and controlling time is the increased support and scholarly legitimation of the measurement and control of space. Alongside the astronomical maps and scholarship discussed at the beginning of this chapter, scholars in Alexandria developed technologies and strategies for recording and mapping physical distances. While we see a similar impulse to record distances in Herodotus' account of Egypt, the practice becomes divorced from the autoptic writings of the peripatetic ethnographer. Instead, we see something akin to cartography and scientific study with the Syene as a waystation for measurement and inquiry. The clearest case of this is in calculation of the earth's diameter using measurements from the well of Syene, likely one of the handful of Nilometers of the region. This shows the confluence of the measurement of time, space, volume, and ultimately power.

¹⁵⁸ See Vassilika (1989) 108 ff.

¹⁵⁹ For a list of offerings of the *wensheb* in the temple of Isis at Philae, see CLP in Vassilika (1989).

¹⁶⁰ Richter (2010) 156 n.10.

¹⁶¹ See Capart (1937); Sambin (1988); Vassilika (1989).

bringing the inundation, and protecting the country and its people. The deities that receive the *wensheb* as an offering become protectors of the border between night and day, the border between winter and summer, and the border between Egypt and Nubia, further linking the spatial and the temporal. The control of this space-time bordering practice is mediated through a measurement device, making water clocks and specifically the visual representation of the offering, a border technology. When the king is represented offering the *wensheb* in temple iconography, it is not just the physical object of the water clock that is offered but also the symbolic meaning behind the water clock, including measurement, timekeeping, protection, inundation, and *ma'at*. Represented by the *wensheb*, the measurement of time was a border technology, mediated through the flow of water, which linked the Myth of the Sun's Eye to the construction of power at the First Cataract border.

5. Conclusion

The Myth of the Sun's Eye shines a light on the importance of Nubia for the Ptolemaic imperial state and the Ptolemaic universal royal ideology. As a place of domination, Nubia is foundational to the construction of the border at the First Cataract in the Ptolemaic imaginary. As a result, the border between Egypt and Nubia took on a defining role in the mythic and geopolitical production of the Ptolemaic empire. The building projects at the border, which integrated and modulated the Myth of the Sun's Eye with the autochthonous inundation ecotheologies, were one aspect of the accumulated striations of power of the Ptolemaic regime. The Ptolemaic southern border represented the imperial power and symbolic control of Nubia as a metonymy for universal empire, which subjugated all foreign lands and enemies (both real and spiritual). As modeled by the Myth of the Sun's Eye, the maintenance and the construction of the border functioned through the kinopolitical circulation of power in the Nubian borderlands.

Constructed through a confluence of congruent kinopolitical circulations, the border was built up as a static junction of productive potentiality that held enormous power in promoting universalism of the Ptolemaic royal ideology.

The Myth of the Sun's Eye and its connection to the inundation became a cornerstone of Ptolemaic religious policy and royal ideology disseminated throughout the Mediterranean. For instance, as explored in great depth by Barrett, the Myth of the Sun's Eye featured heavily in the religious landscape of Delos in the Ptolemaic period.¹⁶² In the opening of this chapter, one version of the universal royal ideology is presented in the birth house of the Temple of Isis at Philae: "I give you what the sun sees in the sky and what its eyes encompass." As explored in this chapter, the light of the sun and the encompassing of the Eye is not static. It is a process that must be renewed daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, etc. in the temples and by the Ptolemaic rulers. As a process, it is actively related to other cyclical processes, specifically the process of inundation and the heliacal rising of Sothis. Through piety and strong rulership, the sun shines, the Nile inundates, the borders circulate, and the Ptolemaic empire is universal.

¹⁶² Barrett (2011) Ch. 4.

CHAPTER 4: A HEART OF GOLD: REVEALING THE PTOLEMAIC EMPIRE IN *ALEXANDER ROMANCE* 3.18-24

1. Introduction

Borders are places of interactions, even and especially in fictional imaginings.¹ In these interactions, the border transcends the physical space and becomes a metonymy for the interactive relationship between neighboring nations. Such fictional imaginings reveal perceptions of the Other both in a perceived literary context and in the period of composition. These fictional borders, both geopolitical and postmodern—race, gender, human/environment, construct imagined borders in the mind of the audience and have an important position, even if indirect, in cultural creation.

One example of such a fictional imagining of the geopolitical and postmodern borders and bordering between Egypt and Nubia² is in the Kandake episode in the *Alexander Romance* (3.18-24). This episode imagines fictionalized interactions between Queen Kandake of Meroë and Alexander the Great, first in an exchange of letters and then in a clandestine meeting in Meroë. It contributes to the vision of Alexander *kosmokrator* (“ruler of the world”), which is promoted throughout the *Alexander Romance* and Alexander the Great’s afterlife in the Hellenistic and Romance periods, especially in Egypt. As *kosmokrator*, Alexander links a particularly Egyptian view of world domination via subjugation of Nubia, which flourished in the Ptolemaic period, to Alexander’s vision of universal royal ideology, described in later historiographical accounts of his conquests through the term *pothos*, or desire.

¹ For a discussion of Greek fiction, see Whitmarsh (2013) 11-34.

² In Greek, Nubia is called Aithiopia from Αἰθίοψ it derives from a compound of αἴθω (“I burn” or “I light up”) and ὤψ (face), meaning either “burnt-face” or “bright-face.” The Egyptian word for Nubia is *nbw*, meaning gold.

In the Kandake episode of the *Alexander Romance*, the border between Egypt and Nubia delineates more than territory but also distinguishes genders, race/ethnicity, and relationship with nature. While these identities fall along typical binaries: male/female; black/white; subjugator/subjugated; human/nature, the power hierarchies are consistently subverted, revealing more complex power dynamics at play in the imagined borderings between Egypt and Nubia, both in the *Alexander Romance* and in the Ptolemaic empire.

2. The *Alexander Romance*

2.1 Background and Plot

The *Alexander Romance* is one of the most popular and influential texts to come out of the Greco-Roman world. In three books, it narrates a fictional account of Alexander the Great's life, exploits, and travels, both real and imaginary. The first book starts with Alexander's conception and birth, relaying a tradition that he is the child of Olympias and Nectanebo, the last Pharaoh of Egypt. Then, the book continues with Alexander's childhood and adolescence, where he murders his unknown-to-him father Nectanebo, is educated by Aristotle, competes in the Olympic Games, quarrels with his "father" Philip, and invades Asia. Following his invasions of Asia, Alexander goes to Egypt, where he hears an oracle from the god Ammon. In the oracle, he is told to found Alexandria. Then he travels to Memphis, where he is recognized as the reincarnation of Nectanebo. Next, he conquers Asia, especially through a long campaign with the Persian king Darius, which is narrated through diplomatic letters.

The second book continues with the Persian campaign. Darius asks for help from the Indian king Porus, and Alexander plays tricks on the Persians, including visiting the Persian court in disguise. Alexander burns Persepolis, and then Darius is murdered by his own satraps. Alexander marries Darius' daughter Roxane. Then, Alexander writes a long letter to his mother

Olympias describing his travels to fantastic places and meeting strange people and creatures.

Next, Alexander travels to India, where he visits the City of the Sun, where he is given an oracle portending his death.

In the third book, Alexander defeats King Porus of India in single combat. He then visits the Brahmans and writes a letter to Aristotle about India. He visits the trees of the Sun and Moon and decides to visit the palace of Semiramis, in which Queen Kandake of Meroë lives. He rescues her daughter-in-law and visits Queen Kandake in disguise. Kandake's son Kandaules brings Alexander to the Dwellings of the Gods, where he meets the legendary pharaoh Sesonchosis and his death is again foretold by Ammon. Alexander then visits the Amazons, whom he makes his subjects. He writes a second letter to Olympias, which describes the City of the Sun and the palace of Cyrus. He then travels to Babylon, in which he receives an omen of his death. He is served poison by the son of Antipater, who is the ruler of Macedon, and falls ill. On his deathbed, Alexander makes a will and appoints rulers of the provinces of his territory. He dies, and Ptolemy brings his body to Egypt. The *Romance* ends with a list of cities Alexander founded.

2.2 Textual history and Ptolemaic Influences

The textual history of the *Alexander Romance* is complex, lacking both unity and conformity, as one can expect from an anonymous work that circulated widely. As a result, the *Alexander Romance* should be characterized as a textual tradition rather than as a single text. In what follows, I use three recensions of the *Alexander Romance* tradition in Greek, each of which provide variations on the Kandake episode: Recensio α , β , and γ .³ Recensio α (often called the

³ In scholarship, the *Alexander Romance* is referred to as the *Historia Alexandria Magni*. For a list of all recensions and manuscripts, see <https://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/notices/oeuvre/id/6809>.

“alpha recension”) is the oldest Greek version and is preserved in a unique manuscript from the 11th century.⁴ It “most closely resembles a conventional historical work,” because it is missing nearly all of the fabulous elements that made the text so popular in later traditions.⁵ Stoneman suggests that the origins of this recension are from the 3rd c. CE.⁶ Recensio β,⁷ likely originating from 300 to 550 CE and known in many manuscripts, is closely related to Recensio α, though provides a fuller version and attempts to correct chronology issues from Recensio α.⁸ Recensio γ was the “latest and longest version,” characterized by a “markedly inferior style” and having a “heavy admixture of Jewish and Christian material.”⁹ From the differences in the Greek manuscripts, which change verse to prose, rearrange the narrative, and add new letters and

⁴ cod. Paris. gr. 1711; Kroll (1926) is the main edition of the alpha recension (Recensio α or A). Some scholars use the Latin capital A for this recension and α to mean the hypothetical original text, which was reconstructed by Ausfeld (1907). Ausfeld’s reconstruction was translated in English by Haight (1955). In this chapter, I refer to this recension by the Greek letter α.

⁵ Stoneman (1991) 28. Scholars posit that this recension is closest to the original, though it is missing certain episodes that were likely included in the original, such as the letter to Olympias (2.23-41) (Dowden, 1989, 652). Recensio α was the basis for the Latin translation by Julius Valerius in the middle 4th c. CE; an Armenian translation of the 5th c. CE, which supplemented and corrected the Greek text; and possibly an 11th c. CE Arabic version (Stoneman, 1991, 28; Wolohojian, 1969, 2).

⁶ Stoneman (1991) 7, 16, 20, 28

⁷ For Recensio β, see Bergson (1965), which includes a list of manuscripts. See also <https://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/notices/recension/id/490>. Bergson (1965) edits cod. Leidensi Vulc. 93, cod. Paris. gr. 1685, and cod. Messinensi 62. The manuscripts date from the 11th to the 15th c. CE. In this chapter, I refer to this recension by the Greek letter β.

⁸ Stoneman (1991) 28. For instance, the letter to Olympias is expanded. Recensio β served as a source for Recensio λ, which exists in five MSS. The fullest manuscript stemming from Recensio β is manuscript L, which is similar to Recensio λ and served as the basis for Dowden’s (1989) and Stoneman’s (1991) translations. Both use H. van Thiel’s (1959) edition of manuscript L. Stoneman relies on a composite of manuscripts and versions for his translation, which is fuller than Dowden’s. Recensio ε, which combines parts of the original Recensio α and some material from Recensio β, was compiled in around the 8th c. CE.

⁹ Stoneman (1991) 29. For Recensio γ, see von Lauenstein (1962); Engelmann (1963); Parthe (1969). Recensio γ is combination Recensio ε and β. In this chapter, I refer to this recension by the Greek letter γ.

episodes, the *Alexander Romance* tradition was clearly flexible and allowed for cultural and literary adaptations.¹⁰

As a result of the flexibility of the tradition and the composite nature of the text itself, the text presents a scholarly enigma, which is succinctly presented by Dowden's introduction of his translation:

Its author is unknown, its date uncertain, its literary qualities doubtful; but eighty versions in twenty-four languages testify to a popularity and diffusion exceeded only by the Bible.¹¹

Missing in this summation is also an indeterminate text. Both the extent of the lacunae and the variations in the recensions complicate the study of the text. With an unknown author, an unknown date, and an unknowable text, the *Alexander Romance* has been deemed an "open text," which David Konstan defines as a work that "admit[s] a degree of variation and indeterminacy that is incompatible with authorial control."¹² Thus, while the authorship (or compilation) of the *Alexander Romance* has typically been attributed to a certain pseudo-

¹⁰ See Whitmarsh (2013) 86-100 for a reconstruction of how this additive process may have worked in the letter between Darius and Alexander. Moreover, the earliest texts of the Greek *Alexander Romance* may have been compiled from other sources. One such source is a proposed epistolary novel that may have circulated around 100 BCE, which included correspondences between Alexander and major historical and literary figures, especially King Darius of Persia, Olympias, Aristotle, the naked philosophers, and Queen Kandake of Meroë. This lost epistolary novel (*Briefroman*) theory was proposed by Merkelbach (1954) 32-50, who included thirty-eight letters in his reconstructions. This theory was adopted by subsequent scholars (e.g., Berg, 1973, 383; Dowden, 1989, 650-651). More recently, Whitmarsh (2013) 89-92 has provided a rebuttal of this theory, calling Merkelbach's *Briefroman* a "*Quellenforscher's* fantasy." As evidence against Merkelbach's theory, he cites Burstein's (1989) article, which identifies lines from the letter of Darius to Alexander from the Hamburg Papyrus (*P.Hamb.* 605) on the back of a relief from the early rule of Tiberius (*SEG* 33.802). The final line suggests that Darius' letter was embedded in a larger narrative, which undermines Merkelbach's *Briefroman* theory. Instead, Whitmarsh suggests "we are dealing with... a multimedia matrix of textual variants, a "text network" rather than an originally pristine *Briefroman* thereafter debased in the *Romance*."

¹¹ Dowden (1989) 650.

¹² Konstan (1998) 127.

Callisthenes, this is a scholarly fiction from deep within the tradition.¹³ The openness of the text also presents an issue with the dating. As an open text, should the *Alexander Romance* be dated from the appearance of “component elements” or from the first known manuscript?¹⁴ Do we date text or tradition? Different scholars will answer these questions differently based on the necessities of their inquiry. For the purposes of this chapter, I am dating the tradition, which has its origins in the early Hellenistic period.¹⁵

Not only do the major elements of the text have a Hellenistic origin, but they also have an Alexandrian context, which points to the text being of Alexandrian origin.¹⁶ The major Alexandrian elements in the plot are the paternity of Alexander by the Egyptian pharaoh Nectanebo in disguise as the Egyptian god Ammon (1.1-14), the foundation of Alexandria (1.30-34), the establishment of the cult of Sarapis (1.30-33), Alexander’s visit to Memphis and reception by the Egyptians as the reincarnation of Nectanebo (1.34), and the frequent presence of the legendary Egyptian pharaoh Sesonchosis (1.30; 3.24, 30). The fictional encounter between Alexander and the Meroïtic Queen Kandake likely also had Ptolemaic origins.

The *Alexander Romance* also fits in the cosmopolitan Ptolemaic literary context, especially replete with narrative wonder tales, romances, and oracles, which existed in both Greek and demotic Egyptian literature of the period and had substantial intercultural Greco-

¹³ Several fifteenth-century manuscripts attribute the work to Callisthenes, Alexander’s court historian. This is impossible, because Callisthenes was executed before Alexander’s death, so he could not have completed the text. (Stoneman, 1991, 6).

¹⁴ Though we have nearly nothing extant from the first phase in Alexander historiography, “component elements” certainly appear as early as the 3rd c. BCE in authors such as Kleitarchos.

¹⁵ Ausfeld (1907) 251-252; Pfister (1946) 42-44; Berg (1973); Stoneman (1991) 8. In fact, Stoneman goes further arguing that not only were the “component elements” – historical, Egyptian elements, and correspondences with Darius – circulating, they were also “combined into a single narrative by the end of the third century BCE.” cf. Kroll (1926) and Merkelbach (1954), who believe it was a product of Roman times

¹⁶ Berg (1973) 384-5; Stoneman (1991) 9.

Egyptian influences.¹⁷ Moreover, the Alexander historiography and legend had extensive roots in Alexandria. One of the main sources for Alexander's life and exploits was from the writings of Ptolemy I, the first Ptolemaic king of Egypt and a general under Alexander the Great. Ptolemy I's work circulated in its own right at least until the first century BCE and was cited as an authority especially by Arrian in his *Anabasis of Alexander*.¹⁸ Arrian treated Ptolemy as the most trustworthy authority, because "he not only campaigned with Alexander but also was a king

¹⁷ Stoneman (1991) 9. E.g.: *The Dream of Nectanebo, the Oracle of the Potter, The Romance of Sesonchosis, the Inaros Cycle*. Jay (2016) has much to add to this topic on the relationship between Egyptian literature and the Greek novel, as well as the "Homeric question" of the Inaros Cycle. The *Alexander Romance* tradition also interacted with contemporary "ruler novels," such as *The Sesonchosis Novel and the Ninus (and Semiramis) Novel* (Trnka-Amrhein, 2018). The latter two "ruler novels are known from papyrus fragments, which suggest a late Ptolemaic or early Roman date. *The Sesonchosis Novel*: West (1977); O'Sullivan and Beck (1982); O'Sullivan (1984); Ruiz Montero (1989); Stephens and Winkler (1995) 246-266; Trnka-Amrhein (2018); Trnka-Amrhein (2020). *The Ninus (and Semiramis) Novel*: Levi (1944); Stephens and Winkler (1995) 23-71; López Martínez (1998) 37-80; Dalley (2013); Whitmarsh (2018). The papyrus fragments of the *The Ninus (and Semiramis) Novel* date to the 1st c. CE, suggesting an earlier composition in the Hellenistic period. The papyri fragments of *The Sesonchosis Novel* have Roman references and date to the 2nd c. CE (Trnka-Amrhein, 2020, 87-88), though there may have been earlier variants. While both novels circulated in Egypt, *The Sesonchosis Novel* is clearly an Egyptian composition, which may have derived from a demotic version that seemed to circulate earlier than the Greek version (Ryholt, 2010; Trnka-Amrhein, 2020, 86. These date from the 1st c. BCE to the 2nd c. CE). The many similarities between the *Alexander Romance* and *The Sesonchosis Novel* further suggest an Egyptian compositional context with, at the very least, origins in the Ptolemaic period (cf. Trnka-Amrhein, 2018).

¹⁷ Ryholt (2010); Trnka-Amrhein (2020) 86. These date from the 1st c. BCE to the 2nd c. CE.

¹⁸ For Ptolemy's fragments see *FGrH* 138 F 1-35. See Arrian: 1.1-2; 1.2-3.4; 1.8; 2.11.8; 2.12.3-6; 3.3.5-6; 3.4.5; 6.11.5; 3.17.6; 3.26.1-4; 3.29.6-30.5; 4.3.5; 4.14.1; 4.14.3; 4.24.1-25.4; 5.7.1; 5.14.5-15.2; 5.20.2; 5.20.8-9; 5.28.3-5; 6.2.4; 6.10.1; 6.11.7-8; 6.28.2; 7.13.2-3; 7.15.5-6; 7.26.3-27; 4.3.6-4.6.5; 5.21.1-24.8. For the dating of circulation see Prandi (2010) and (2012) and Capponi (2011) 322. Papyrus fragments also circulated in Egypt until the first century BCE (*POxy* IV 69; and possibly *PHamb* IV 130, *PCairo* 49653; less likely though may have been influenced by Ptolemy I is *POxy* LVI 3823v); see Prandi (2010) and Capponi (2011). While his work certainly circulated, it is unclear how popular or how read Ptolemy I's work was outside of the scholars.

himself and would have found it more shameful than anyone else to lie.”¹⁹ This suggests the importance of Alexandrian historiography in Ptolemaic literary and political *milieu* and how the historiography of Alexander was explicitly linked to the Ptolemies and especially Ptolemaic kingship.

An even more important Ptolemaic scholarly influence on the Alexander Romance was Kleitarchos’ *Histories of Alexander*, which is lost and only preserved indirectly in fragments through other authors such as Strabo.²⁰ Kleitarchos worked in Alexandria in the c. 3rd c. BCE and was frequently quoted and discussed by scholars in antiquity.²¹ Kleitarchos’ style is characterized by Cicero as fictionalizing, not lying but embellishing to serve the narrative purpose, which was a style arguably shared with the *Alexander Romance*, suggesting stylistic similarities between early Ptolemaic Alexandrography (writings about Alexander the Great) and the *Alexander Romance*.²² Thus, as Stoneman argues, “the basic framework [of the *Alexander Romance*] was already established in Ptolemaic Alexandria.”²³

¹⁹ Arrian 1.1-2. This does not necessarily mean that Ptolemy was in fact a trustworthy source. The other of Arrian’s trustworthy sources is Aristoboulos son of Aristoboulos, who also campaigned with Alexander.

²⁰ Dowden (1989) 651; Prandi (2012).

²¹ *FGrH* 137. Very little is known about Kleitarchos, and the dating of his life and work is highly debated by scholars. For a summary of the debates about Kleitarchos’ dating see Prandi (2016). Scholars who quoted and discussed him include Sotion (F 6), Eratosthenes (F 12, F 13), Dionysios *Skytobrachion* (F 17), Philodemos (T 11, T 12), and Timagenes (T 8). His fame moved also to Rome, where he was discussed by Cicero (T 7), Sisenna (T 13), Longinus (T 9), Demetrios (T 10), Pliny (T 2), and Quintilianus (T 6). As discussed by Prandi (2016), some scholars have argued that Diodorus of Sicily’s Book 17 reproduced Kleitarchos’ work (Jacoby (1921) and Goukowsky (1976), cf. Wirth (1993).

²² Cicero, *Brutus* 42: *concessum est rhetoribus ementiri in historiis, ut aliquid dicere possint argutius*. See Berg (2021) 122-124 for an analysis of this line.

²³ Stoneman (1991) 8.

3. The Kandake Episode (3.18-24)

The Kandake episode (3.18-24) of the *Alexander Romance* is a fictional extension of Alexander's historic empire. Its invention assists in establishing Alexander's legacy as *kosmokrator*, or "ruler of the world." The episode has a secondary purpose—an ulterior *raison d'être*—by providing a foundation for Ptolemaic universal imperial ideology, specifically vis-à-vis the conquest of Nubia. The rest of this chapter explores the function of this episode within the narrative of the *Alexander Romance* and in its ulterior *raison d'être* as a model for (or response to) Ptolemaic imperial activities in Nubia.

3.1 Plot

Following Alexander's successful campaign against India, where he defeated King Porus in hand-to-hand combat and visited with the Brahmans, Alexander decides to visit the palace of Semiramis, which is inhabited by Queen Kandake of Meroë, the capital city of the Meroitic kingdom of Nubia. The episode that follows (3.18-24) is in two parts. The first is a pseudo-documentary epistolary exchange between Alexander and Queen Kandake.²⁴ The second is an imaginative, fictional account of Alexander's clandestine visit to Meroë to visit Queen Kandake.

In the epistolary exchange, Alexander writes to Queen Kandake with a request to visit the oracle of Ammon in Nubia.²⁵ He is particularly interested because the Ammon oracle in Nubia

²⁴ For the epistolary exchange as "pseudo-documentary" see Arthur-Montagne (2014) 166-170. For an account of epistolography in the *Alexander Romance*, see Whitmarsh (2013) 86-100 and Whitmarsh (2013) 169-186.

²⁵ For the Amun cult in Nubia, see Gabolde (2021). Ammon was a Libyan god syncretized to Amun in Egypt and in Nubia, where the supreme deity was particularly worshipped at Jebel Barkal near the Kushite city of Napata at the Fourth Cataract of the Nile. Interestingly, the home of Ammon in Libya, Siwa had a mixed Egyptian-Aithiopian population, according to Herodotus 2.42.3-4.

was a Amun was an important national and universal god, who became the protector of Kushite kingship. He seems to have gained popularity in Nubia after the Egyptian conquest during the New Kingdom (343). Amun was occasionally merged with Khnum of Elephantine (347).

was an instrumental factor in the queen's successful conquest of Egypt. In his request, Alexander gives two alternatives for his visit to the Ammon oracle. First, he requests that Kandake bring the shrine and statue of Ammon to her border, where he will consult with the god. The second alternative is that he will come to Meroë to discuss other arrangements with Kandake. She replies to Alexander's request with a resounding, "No" to both options. She will not bring Ammon to the border and, if Alexander crosses the border into Nubia, she will have her troops ready for him. She makes it clear that an oracle of Ammon has commanded her to deny both requests. As an alternative, she offers generous tribute to Alexander.²⁶

Upon the conclusion of the letter, the narrative picks back up with Alexander sending someone to collect his gifts from Queen Kandake. Meanwhile, she has sent an artist to paint his likeness, so that she may look upon the face of the great conqueror. After a few days, Queen Kandake's son Kandaules comes to Alexander's tents to ask for his help in rescuing his wife, who has been stolen by the king of the Bebrykes. Alexander meets him disguised as his general Antigonos and has Ptolemy crowned as his proxy king. Alexander (as Antigonos) successfully assists Kandaules in recovering his wife, who had been kidnapped and sexually violated, having been found in the bed of the King of the Bebrykes. Afterwards, Kandaules invites Alexander (as Antigonos) to come to Meroë to meet his mother Queen Kandake at her palace, where she will reward him with great gifts.

Alexander, still disguised as Antigonos, agrees and travels to Meroë, although it is against the wishes of Kandake, as laid out in their previous letters. During his visit, Alexander

²⁶ Her tone changes so abruptly from hostility to generosity that some scholars speculate that there is a lacuna in the text, presumably a missing letter from Alexander (cf. Merkelbach, 1977, 146). The content of this supposed letter may have been Alexander sharing the oracular response received at Siwa. This interpolation, however, is not necessary; Kandake's hostility is to invasion not tribute.

wonders at the landscape, the animals, and the riches of the palace, which he tours with Kandake, who knows the man posing as Antigonos is in fact Alexander. During his tour of the palace, Alexander insults the queen. As a result, she reveals Alexander's identity, which leads Alexander to threaten to kill himself, having finally been bested. Queen Kandake, however, shows him clemency, allowing his identity to remain hidden in repayment for saving his son and daughter-in-law from the Bebrykes.²⁷ Even disguised as Antigonos, the youngest son of Queen Kandake threatens to kill Alexander to avenge the death of his father-in-law King Porus of India, whom Alexander had killed in hand-to-hand combat. Kandaules, the elder son of Queen Kandake, threatens to fight his brother to the death on behalf of Alexander (as Antigonos) for his help in saving his wife. Queen Kandake asks Alexander to come up with a clever plot to prevent her two sons from killing each other, which Alexander successfully accomplishes. As a result, Queen Kandake presents Alexander with great gifts and an escort of her own soldiers. During his return trip, Alexander visits the Dwelling of the Gods, where he is welcomed by Sesonchosis, the legendary Egyptian world-conquering pharaoh, who assists him in consulting the oracle of Ammon.

In each of his goals, Alexander is ultimately successful, though Queen Kandake is the only opponent in the *Alexander Romance* who ever bested him in tricks and cleverness. Alexander does get to consult the oracle of Ammon, visit the palace of Semiramis, follow in the footsteps of Sesonchosis, add an important kingdom from the southern axis of the *oikoumene* to his world-empire, and collect significant tribute. Thus, without military might and even when bested, Alexander proves himself *kosmokrator*.

²⁷ 3.22: ““But do not fret, child Alexander. Because you saved my son and his wife who had been captured by the Bebrykes, I will save you from the barbarians, by calling you Antigonos.”

3.2 Alexander *kosmokrator* vis-à-vis Nubia

The goal of the *Alexander Romance*, according to Berg, was to “transform a historical figure into a national patron saint and a world conqueror”—a *kosmokrator*—by extending his fictional empire throughout the entire *oikoumene*—inhabited world—and beyond, spanning far past Alexander’s historical empire.²⁸ Alexander the Great, one of the few mortals to be given the appellation *kosmokrator*, achieved this status in the *Alexander Romance* by imitating previous world conquerors (*imitatio*) and using non-violent imperial methods, namely tribute acquisition and autopsy. In the *Alexander Romance*, Alexander employed all three methods—*imitatio*, tribute, and autopsy—to add Nubia to his world-empire, which he accomplishes in the Kandake episode (3.18-24).

While completely fictional, the scene is set in a way that lends legitimacy and makes it appear to be historical. For instance, the episode is introduced with a pseudo-documentary epistolary exchange that mimics authentic historical letters which circulated after Alexander’s death.²⁹ Furthermore, the queen, her sons, and some of their wives are given names. The royal family is embedded into historical royal families through dynastic marriages. The location is tied to historical (though legendary) figures such as Semiramis and Sesonchosis. The goal, then, was likely to pass the story off as authentic to unsuspecting readers.

Why go to the lengths to create a false yet believable Nubian conquest? The author(s) of the *Alexander Romance* tradition had a problem because of Nubia. Alexander, the great world-

²⁸ Berg (1973) 384-5. Berg gives the example of Semiramis; Sesostris; Joseph; Nectanebo. Three elements of the *Alexander Romance* transform Alexander into a “national patron saint:” his Egyptian paternity through Nectanebo (1.14), his reception by the Egyptian people as the heir of Nectanebo (1.34), and his entombment in Egypt upon his death entrusted to Ptolemy (3.34).

²⁹ Arthur-Montagne (2014) 166-170. For epistolography in the *Alexander Romance*, see Whitmarsh (2013) 86-100 and Whitmarsh (2013) 169-186.

conqueror, never conquered Nubia. How can Alexander be a *kosmokrator* if he has not conquered Nubia? The importance of this problem in the Alexander tradition is put into clear relief when considering the ideological importance of Nubian subjugation for Egyptian imperialism.

As explored in Chapter 4.2.2 above, the *Alexander Romance* tradition had significant Ptolemaic influences. Furthermore, the Kandake episode is particularly imbued with Egyptian and Ptolemaic influences. Not only is it set in Africa and centers Nubia, Egypt's neighbor, but it also features the legendary Egyptian pharaoh *Sesonchosis* as a model to be imitated. The most important Ptolemaic element is Alexander legitimating Ptolemaic rule in Egypt by crowning Ptolemy as his royal proxy: Alexander "took his crown and set it on Ptolemy's head, threw his cloak around his shoulders and said to him, "Sit on the throne as if you were Alexander."³⁰ Given this evidence, it is likely that at least the chapters concerning Queen Kandake in Nubia arose in a Ptolemaic *milieu*. Thus, pseudo-historical Nubian conquest in the Egyptian imperial model makes sense for the context of its presumed composition and circulation.³¹

What is the Egyptian imperial model in the Kandake episode of the *Alexander Romance*? First, it is necessary to examine the term *kosmokrator* itself. The term *kosmokrator* ("ruler of the world") seems to have developed from the Hellenized Egyptian *milieu*. Unattested in the

³⁰ AR 3.19. This is the only time in the *Alexander Romance* when Alexander's crown is worn by or transferred to another person.

³¹ There are also some elements that suggest the passage was written to accommodate multiple circulation contexts in the Hellenic world. For instance, the Kandake episode includes elements of both Aithiopia and India. See Szalc (2014) for a full treatment of the Indian elements in the Kandake episode. For instance, the episode's inclusion in Book III, following Alexander's conquest of India, instead of the more expected Book I or beginning of Book II, following Alexander's conquest of Egypt, suggests a nebulous geographic setting. Moreover, familial relationships between Queen Kandake and King Porus of India, whose daughter is married to the queen's younger son, shows that the confusion is not only misplacement in the text. In this chapter, I will focus on the Nubian aspects of the episode.

Alexander historians, the term was quite popular in the *Alexander Romance*, especially in the Egyptian contexts and in reference to the legendary pharaoh Sesonchosis.³² Beyond the Egyptian episodes of the *Alexander Romance*, the term *kosmokrator* is primarily found in Hellenized Egyptian contexts—e.g., the summary of Manetho, the Egyptian historian from the Ptolemaic period; magical papyri and astronomical texts from an Egyptian context; and Horapollo’s

³² Nawotka and Wojciechowska (2014) 146. *Kosmokrator* used related to Alexander’s birth and youth: 1.12.8; 1.16.5; 1.17.5; used to Alexander as Sesonchosis: 1.33.6; 1.34.2; 3.17.17; 3.42.2; 3.34.5. While in the earlier recensions the concept of *kosmokrator* exists as a title and abstract concept, the γ recension, the latest and longest Greek version, reifies the term through a scene set in Egypt (2.26-27). Alexander comes upon the statue of Nectanebo, which is inscribed “Whoever enters my house, I will place this crown on his head. You shall all recognize this man as my son. He will travel over the whole earth. His name shall be given to this city” (AR 2.27). As Alexander enters, the statue of Nectanebo crowns Alexander and places an orb in his left hand, an act signifying Alexander’s legitimacy as Nectanebo’s heir and his role as *kosmokrator* via Egyptian kingship. NB: While the γ recension is the latest, this episode concludes with a statement that suggests that this story was a popular and well-circulated folk tale, likely coming from the Egyptian *milieu*: “That was the story that became known to everyone” (AR 2.27). As with other elements of the open text, the popular tale was likely added as the text expanded, especially since it connects to important themes. At least this version of this folk tale was likely invented in the Roman period, responding to the Roman concept of *orbis terrarum* (see below). The importance of the theme of *kosmokrator* in this recension is particularly clear from its title: Διήγησις ἐξάριετος καὶ ὄντως θαυμασία τοῦ κοσμοκράτορος Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ βασιλέως (“Curious and Truly Miraculous History of the Ruler of the world, King Alexander”). The imagery of crown and orb/globe is from the late Roman period. The image of the Roman emperor holding the globe as a symbol of his *imperium ad termini orbis terrarum* is very prevalent, especially on coins. Even in the republican period, Pompey’s victories in Africa, Spain, and the East are recorded on coins with a globe. In Pompey’s theater, he is portrayed in sculpture as holding a globe in his left hand (Cosgrove, 47, 2001). Cf. Molnar (1998) argues that the orb symbolizes the celestial globe. The image of a Roman emperor receiving a globe from either a god or his predecessor is a frequent theme on coins, e.g., Trajan receiving the globe from Nerva on the reverse of a coin (RSC 319a). A coin that features both a globe and a crown is RIC V Diocletian 328 from 284 CE, which has Diocletian in a radiate crown on the obverse and the emperor receiving Victory on a globe from Jupiter on the reverse. While the globes proliferated on Roman coins, the earliest coins featuring a globe are from a Macedonian context, namely from Uranopolis, featuring Aphrodite Urania seated on a globe (BMC 1, Moushmov 6906, AMNG III-2 corr.; Moushmov 6909, AMNG III-2, 3, SNG ANS 914-918, BMC 2-4, Sear SG 1475; SNG ANS 918, SNG Copenhagen 458.). As Urania is the muse of astronomy, this globe certainly symbolizes the celestial globe and likely did not have an imperial dimension (Yarrow, 2010, 137).

Hieroglyphica.³³ This suggests that the concept of Alexander the Great as the “ruler of the world” blossomed in the cross-cultural Alexandrian *milieu*, which fostered the concept of a universal Egyptian kingship and an Egyptian “universal imperial ideology.”³⁴ As further evidence of this Egyptian “universal imperial ideology,” the term *kosmokrator* may have arisen in the Egyptian milieu, given its similarity to the Egyptian term *nb r dr* (“ruler of the world” or, literally, “lord to the limit”). The term is most frequently associated with the principal gods of Egypt but was also occasionally used for pharaohs, most notably Sesostris (believed to be the historical forebear of Sesonchosis) and the Ptolemaic kings.³⁵

The term *nb r dr* is associated with Egyptian imperial ideology and practice, especially the *tš(w) / drw* model of Egyptian imperialism.³⁶ This model is built on complementary forces—*tš(w)* and *drw*, both of which are associated with “the king’s actions in foreign lands.”³⁷ Whereas “the king goes forward to make or extend his *tšw* [Egypt’s borders/empire], he comes back bringing in a foreign chief’s *drw* [foreign borders/goods of the land].”³⁸ In the title *nb r dr*, one is lord (*nb*) of (*r*) the limit (*dr*), meaning one goes out to the furthest limits, whether that be a foreign ruler’s border or the “four pillars of heaven/earth,” which marked the extreme ends of the world. Not only does one go there, one brings it back via the goods of the land (*in drw*). By bringing in a foreign chief’s *drw*, the Egyptian pharaoh is given “the sole right to acquire goods

³³ Nawotka and Wojciechowska (2014) 148. See Georgius Syncellus: transl. W.G. Waddell (1940), fr. 5c; Horapollo’s *Hieroglyphica* 1.61.9: A.T. Cory transl.; Krocak and Sokolski (2003) 14-16.

³⁴ Strootman (2022) 190.

³⁵ Nawotka and Wojciechowska (2014) 149-150. Sesostris: *The Instruction of Amenemhat* (Lichtheim (2006) n. 22, 1. 135-136; Obsomer (1989); Sethe (1900)). Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos: Kom Ombo (Morgan, 1894-5, 163, 208); Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II: Dendera.

³⁶ Discussed in the Introduction (fn. 12 and 14).

³⁷ Galan (1995) 131.

³⁸ Galan (1995) 131. See also Török (2008) 8.

on a more or less regular basis (as a form of tribute or trade).”³⁹ Through the acquisition of proprietary and regular trade, the Egyptian pharaoh becomes overlord of the region and the foreign chief’s territory becomes part of the pharaoh’s *ḥꜥ(w)*, the extent of his authority.⁴⁰ The *nb r dr*, then, suggests a specific type of imperialism that relied on accumulation of tributary states, which, as this chapter shows, coincides with the outcome of Alexander’s activities in Nubia.

One way in which Alexander is transformed into a *kosmokrator* in the *Alexander Romance* is through the imitation of other legendary world conquerors, especially Sesonchosis,

³⁹ Galan (1995) 135.

⁴⁰ Galan (1995) 135.

introduced below.⁴¹ This form of modeling, called *imitatio*, has “a long tradition in Egypt.”⁴² In each case, Alexander is either linked by ancestry and/or action to the other conquerors, often trying to match or beat them. For instance, in 2.34 in the γ recension, Alexander comes upon golden statues of both Herakles and Semiramis in India and then visits the abandoned palace of

⁴¹ Other world conquerors Alexander imitates in the *Alexander Romance* are Herakles, Dionysos, and Semiramis. For instance, in *AR* 1.15: when Philip heard the oracle about his successor, who would rule the whole world, he “began to anticipate a second Herakles;” 1.46: “...and furthermore, Alexander [Dionysos and Herakles] are your ancestors, whom you should imitate and to whom you should do good.”; 1.46: “Why do you insult your own parents, son of Herakles and Dionysos.?”; 3:32: “Herakles, the first ancestor of King Alexander.” Present in the Kandake episode, Semiramis was one world conqueror that Alexander wanted to imitate. The purported ancestor of Queen Kandake, she ruled as queen regent of the Assyrian Empire and triumphed in campaigns against Egypt, Aithiopia, and India (See Dalley (2005). In recension α , Kandake is said to be the descendant to Semiramis (Σεμράμεως τῆς βασιλίδος ἀπόγονος)). In recension β , Kandake is said to rule over Semiramis’ country. Diodorus Siculus 2.14-20. Semiramis is likely based on the 9th c. BCE historical Assyrian queen Shammuramat. Semiramis’ tale, which is fully recounted by Diodorus Siculus following Ctesias, was popular in the Hellenistic period, where her legend takes on many similarities with Alexander the Great’s own career (Diodorus Siculus II.1-21; Szalc (2015); Stronk (2017); Some similarities may be from Alexander modeling Semiramis, but many similarities are from the Hellenistic tradition of Semiramis being modeled on Alexander. One likely example of Semiramis’ legend being modeled on Alexander is her visiting the oracle of Ammon “to inquire of the god regarding her own end,” which was exactly Alexander’s purpose in visiting Ammon in both Siwa and the Dwelling of the Gods in Nubia (Diodorus Siculus 2.14.3; cf. Diodorus Siculus 17.50)). While scholars have used the presence of Semiramis’ palace in the Kandake episode as evidence of geographic misplacement, since her famous palace was in Babylon, a palace of Semiramis in Meroë is not unexpected, given Semiramis’ legendary conquest of Aithiopia. Alexander’s visit to Semiramis’ palace not only pays homage to another great world-conqueror, but it also allows Alexander to subsume Semiramis’ legacy via the incorporation of her descendant Queen Kandake’s realm into his world-empire. Moreover, Semiramis became a term to mean any Assyrian queen in the Greek tradition, just as Kandake is used in the *Alexander Romance* to suggest both a specific pseudo-historical figure and a symbol for general female leadership of Nubia. Dalley (2013); Dalley (2005). Moreover, Queen Kandake’s relationship with Semiramis and her status as conqueror of Egypt establishes her worthiness as an opponent and thus the worthiness of conquest over Nubia.⁴² Ryholt (2013) 60-1. This type of *imitation* is also found in Greek historiography. For example, Herodotus (2.110) records an unsuccessful attempt at *imitatio* of Sesonchosis/Sesostris by Darius, when the Persian ruler is denied permission to set up statues in front of Sesostris’ statues at Memphis, because he has not proved himself a sufficient world-conqueror as he has not conquered Scythia. *Imitatio* can be categorized into three types: *imitatio*, used in the narrow sense, where A seeks to imitate B; *aemulatio*, where A seeks to rival or surpass B; and *comparatio*, where A is being compared to B by a third party.”

Semiramis, suggesting the extent of her conquest. Then he journeys for another twenty-three days beyond this limit, a region in which he encounters men with six hands and six feet as well as the Dog-heads, until he reaches the sea. This example shows Alexander traveling to the fringes of the *oikoumene*, as delimited by the previous world-conquerors, and then traveling beyond into the mythical peripheries of the known world.

The premier *imitatio* of the *Alexander Romance* and the Kandake episode is Sesonchosis, who was the “personification of a glorious Egyptian past.”⁴³ The legendary Sesonchosis seems to have been based in part on the historical pharaoh Senwosret III (1878-1839 BCE) of the 12th Dynasty in the Middle Kingdom. He is a popular figure in Greco-Roman sources, which alternatively use the spelling Sesostris and Sesoösis. Sesonchosis was famous as a world-conqueror already in Herodotus, though his fame increased in the Hellenistic period, when he was featured in his own “ruler novel.”⁴⁴ Undertaking to “conquer the inhabited earth” and “acquire empire over the whole world,”⁴⁵ Sesonchosis subdued all the people of the Red Sea, every nation of the Asian mainland, the Scythians and Thracians of Europe, and, according to Herodotus, was the only Egyptian king who ruled Aithiopia.⁴⁶ According to Diodorus Siculus,

⁴³ Ryholt (2013) 61. Alexander first encounters Sesonchosis in Egypt, where he sees obelisks with an inscription in hieroglyphs, reading: “King Sesonchosis of Egypt, *kosmokrator*, erected this to Sarapis, the renowned god of the universe” (AR 1.33). Alexander’s main encounter with Sesonchosis is in the Dwelling of the Gods following Alexander’s visit with Kandake in Meroë, where Sesonchosis helps guide Alexander through his consultation of the oracle of Sarapis (AR 3.24).

⁴⁴ Herodotus 2.102-110. West (1992); Trnka-Amrhein (2020). Sesonchosis’ travels and conquests were “eminently expandable in the Graeco-Roman tradition” (74).

⁴⁵ Diodorus Siculus 1.53.8.

⁴⁶ Herodotus 2.109. On the other hand, Herodotus records that there were eighteen Aethiopian kings and one queen who ruled Egypt (2.100). The Egyptian historian Manetho states that Sesostris) “subdued the whole of Asia, and Europe as far as Thrace, everywhere erecting memorials of his conquest of the tribes” (Manetho, *FGrH* 609 f 2 and f 3b). Strabo relates that Sesostris advanced as far as Europe from Iberia to Thrace and the Pontus but did not invade

Alexander fell short of his *imitatio* of Sesonchosis, stating that the Sesonchosis visited “the territory which was afterwards won by Alexander of Macedon, but also certain peoples into whose country Alexander did not cross,” including all of India to the ocean and the Scythians.”⁴⁷ The *Alexander Romance* fills in these gaps, allowing the legendary Alexander to equal or even best Sesonchosis.⁴⁸ For instance, Alexander emulated Sesonchosis, a legendary Egyptian pharaoh likely based on Sesostris, the Middle Kingdom pharaoh. In his travels in the uninhabited land, described in the 2.31 of the γ recension, Alexander comes upon a statue of Sesonchosis with an inscription, which states that the statue marked the boundary of Sesonchosis’ travels around the world.⁴⁹ With a positive oracle from the statue, he continued beyond Sesonchosis’ geographic limit.

A cornerstone of Sesonchosis’ legendary world-empire was his conquest of Nubia, an element that Kandake episode allows Alexander to emulate. In Diodorus Siculus’ recounting, Sesonchosis’ first imperial action was to march against the Aithiopians and after conquering them to force them to pay a tribute in ebony, gold, and the tusks of elephants.⁵⁰ Sesonchosis’ historical counterpart Senwosret III famously set up a pair of monumental stelae at frontier forts at Semna-West (Berlin 14753; Berlin 1157)) and Uronarti (Khartoum No. 451) near the 2nd

India (15.1.6). On Sesosisis/Sesonchosis’ tradition emulating Alexander’s life, see Ryholt (2013) 62.

⁴⁷ Diodorus Siculus 1.55.4-5.

⁴⁸ For example, in *AR* 1.26, Alexander campaigns against the Scythians and demands skilled bowman to fight with him. Moreover, Alexander’s visit to the Brahman’s was considered by some in the ancient world, though highly debated, to be beyond the Ganges (Stoneman, 1995). In Alexander’s letter to Aristotle about India (3.7-16), Alexander mentions seeing a statue with an inscription of Sesonchosis *kosmokrator* on a cliff in India, directly associating Alexander’s visit to India with Sesonchosis’ visit.

⁴⁹ Herodotus records that Sesostris left inscribed pillars and statues demarcating his imperial success (2.102), some of which Herodotus claims to have seen (2.106); West (1992). For a discussion of Egyptian boundary stones, see Galan (1995) 136-155.

⁵⁰ Diodorus Siculus 1.55.1; named Sesosisis.

Cataract, which established a firm southern boundary (*tš rsi*) of Egypt.⁵¹ In the stelae, Senwosret III not only celebrated his establishment of the southern border and his victory over the Nubians but also criticized the Nubians for being cowardly and unworthy. Moreover, Senwosret III established the border as something that should be protected and maintained by his son and his successors, a role that Alexander comes to inhabit in the *Alexander Romance*. Sesonchosis' control of Nubia seems primarily to have been maintained through the collection of tribute.⁵² While it cannot be said that Alexander successfully conquered Nubia in the *Alexander Romance*, he did exact tribute from Queen Kandake, mirroring Sesonchosis' imperial activity in Aithiopia, which will be emulated by the Ptolemies.⁵³

Throughout the *Alexander Romance*, Alexander treats the payment of tribute as acquiescence on the side of his opponents and in many ways equal to military conquest. For

⁵¹ Vogel (2011); These stelae coincide with Herodotus', Diodorus Siculus', and Manetho's report that Sesostris set up *stelae* (or pillars) where he conquered. cf. Emery (1965); Adams (1984); Morkot (2001).

⁵² The act of Nubia presenting extensive tribute to Egypt is an ancient practice. For instance, in the Annals of Tuthmosis III, the pharaoh received products from Nubia, and the text mentions receiving harvest-taxes, suggesting that these were annual tributes, not war plunder (Aldred, 1970, 109-110). A yearly interval for these tributes is also referred to in a model letter in Papyrus Koller III (Davies and Gardiner, 1926, 28; Caminos, 1954, 437-9). In an inscription in Room XIII of Thutmosis III's Festival Hall at Karnak, the tribute from the Southern countries is also an annual event. The tribute depicted consisted of natural products, such as exotic animals like cheetahs, giraffes, apes, and ostriches, and ebony, ivory, and gold. The tribute was consistent year to year and consisted of slaves, cattle, gold, and raw materials from the area, such as ivory, ebony, and pelts. Later in the 18th dynasty, Nubians were depicted giving extensive tributes to pharaoh Tutankhamun (1336-1327 BCE) in the Tomb of Huy, the Egyptian governor of Nubia. For a facsimile of the tribute presented to the pharaoh from the Tomb of Huy, see Accession Number 30.4.21 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In the Persian period, Herodotus records the Aethiopians paying tributes to the Persian kings with a list of goods similar to those found in the New Kingdom: gold, ivory, ebony, and Aethiopian youths (Herodotus 3.97.3).

⁵³ Alexander exacts extensive tribute twice from Kandake in both 3.18 and 3.23. cf. Diodorus Siculus 1.53.8

example, Alexander typically offers his opponents the option between fighting him or providing tribute via letter, with his philosophy summed up in his statement to the African generals:

“Ἡ κρείττονες γίνεσθε ἢ τοῖς κρείττοσι φόρους τελεῖτε.”

“Either become stronger yourselves, or pay tribute to those who are stronger than you.”⁵⁴

Alexander’s world-empire is a tributary empire, which he inherited from both Persia and pharaonic Egypt. Thus, when Queen Kandake pays him tribute, despite his inability to conquer her, Nubia officially becomes part of Alexander’s empire.⁵⁵ The Ptolemaic sovereigns use the same imperial strategy in Nubia, maintaining imperial control over Lower Nubia through the collection of tribute.⁵⁶

Thus, Alexander becomes *kosmokrator* by emulating and exceeding his legendary predecessors, especially by the payment of tribute and/or through autopsy of foreign, wondrous,

⁵⁴ AR 1.29. He repeats this to the Athenians in AR 2.1; cf. 1.26 (Thessalonika); 1.29 (Romans); 1.30 (Africans); 2.1 (Athens); 3.26 (Amazons).

⁵⁵ In AR 2.15 α -text, it becomes clear that Kandake’s territory had already been part of the Persian empire, since her son Kandaules appears at the table of Darius along with other prominent satraps and Persian military leaders. Likely, Kandake was paying a yearly tribute to Darius already, which could easily be transferred to Alexander, who had both defeated Darius and conquered Egypt.

⁵⁶ Cf. the processions of nomes bringing tribute to Isis in Room 1 of the Temple of Isis at Philae (*FHN* II 112); Another Nubian tribute list (*FHN* II 137) from the later Ptolemaic period is carved on a native rock into the pylon of the Temple of Isis at Philae (cf. Urk. II, 116.9-13; Hölbl 1994, 78. f.; 166 f.; LD IV, 27b; PM VI.229-231 (241); Giammarusti and Roccati (1980) 104 ff.). Cf. the *Famine Stele*, which provides an origin story for the tributary relationship between Nubia and Egypt via the Dodekaschoinos: *The Famine Stele*, Simpson (2003) 387; Brugsch (1981); Vandier (1936); Barguet (1957); Goedicke (1994); Hallo and Younger (2002); Quack (1997) 297-300; Casanova (1984); Haiying (1998); Gasse and Rondot (2007). Cf. the great procession of Ptolemy II in Athenaeus 5.196-203, citing Callixeinus of Rhodes in the fourth book of his work on Alexandria. In the procession, which represented a reification of Ptolemy II as *kosmokrator*, Aithiopian gift-bearers (Αἰθίοπες δωροφόροι) carried extensive gifts, included ivory, ebony, and gold, as well as a multitude of Aithiopian goods and animals. Burstein (2008) 140 links these Aethiopian gift-bearers directly to the “corridor to Africa” being opened by Ptolemy II’s Nubian campaigns in the 270s BCE and Nubia becoming a “tributary state” in the Ptolemaic empire: cf. Herodotus 3.97.3 for a list of Nubian tribute to the Persians.

or geographically significant sites at the limits of the heavens and earth.⁵⁷ Through these methods, Alexander builds up a world-empire that spans beyond any historical (including his own) or legendary figure's empire, whether mortal or divine. Moreover, the flexibility of fiction and the openness of the tradition, allows for Alexander's empire to be expanded long after his death, making the *Alexander Romance* a repository not only for the legends of Alexander the Great but also evidence for these legends' utility in shaping ideas of kingship and empire in various times and places.

This element was crucial for molding Alexander's legacy to be legible in an Egyptian context, which would allow the Ptolemies to use *imitatio* of Alexander in *imitatio* of Sesonchosis in constructing their imperial project, especially in Nubia. When Alexander crown Ptolemy, he gave him legitimacy within a specific context. The crowning occurred at the border between Egypt and Nubia and within the context of Alexander's conquest of Nubia. This scene links Ptolemaic legitimacy to rule in Egypt with the imperial incorporation of Nubia as a tributary state,⁵⁸ modeled on pharaonic Egyptian forms of imperialism. Furthermore, the passage transfigures the long-standing Egyptian ideology of the subjugation of Nubia into Hellenistic universal imperial ideology.

⁵⁷ cf. 3.24-5 in which the Amazons initially threaten to join in battle against Alexander when he marches against them. After he writes in a letter that that he has been made lord of the three continents already and would not hesitate to destroy their land, the Amazons acquiesce by sending him significant tribute and women (3.26). The scene ends with the leaders of the Amazons writing to Alexander: "We dwell beyond the edges of the world, but still you have come to be our lord" (3.26). Through well-calculated words, Alexander defeats the legendary Amazons.

⁵⁸ Notably not through military conquest. Aithiopia is considered unconquerable in Greek historiography; cf. Diodorus Siculus 3.2.2.4-3.1.

3.3 The Queen's Two Bodies

In the *Alexander Romance*, Queen Kandake is an embodiment of Nubia, a symbol of her state. Kandake is endowed with a distinct character as a powerful and pious queen, who alone of all Alexander's opponents bests the great conqueror through her own ingenuity. Kandake is fleshed out as a rich, godly, black, mother, taking on many characteristics Greeks associated with Aithiopia.

3.3.1 Kandake the Mother

Kandake's name is in fact not a personal name but a Kushite royal title derived from the Meroitic *ktke* or *kdke*, meaning "Queen Mother" or "Mother of the [reigning] King" or possibly "[king's] sister" and did not, at least originally, refer to a specific ruling queen.⁵⁹ The title derives from the practice of matrilineal succession,⁶⁰ wherein the sister of the king would bear the next heir and rule with her son, known from both Greek and Nubian sources.⁶¹ Kandake's

⁵⁹ *FHN* II 85, Commentary. "Queen Mother"/"Mother of the [reigning] King": Haycock 1965; Wenig 1967; Wenig 1978; Priese 1978; "[king's] sister": Hofmann 1977a; Hofmann 1981, 288 f.; "female (living?) hand": Millet 1973, 39 f., possibly based on the Egyptian title *ḏrt ntr [n Ḳmn]* "hand of the god [of Amun]." The reference to Kandake in the *Alexander Romance* may go back to a now lost work by Bion of Soli, who is referred to in a scholion of the Acts of the Apostles 8:27 (cod. Oxonienses) about the Aethiopian eunuch. Bion (fl. 3rd c. BCE) traveled extensively in Nubia, likely in Ptolemaic service and wrote an *Aithiopika*. The scholion states: "The Aithiopians call each mother of a king Kandake. So Bion in the first book of his *On Ethiopia*: "The Aithiopians do not reveal the fathers of their kings but claim that they are sons of the Sun; and they call the mother of each king Kandake." (Jacoby Online, Bion von Soloi, 668, f1; BNJ 673 F 4a; 163). It was very common for Roman authors to conflate the royal title Kandake with a personal title (cf. Pliny 6.186; Strabo 17.1.53).

⁶⁰ Or more accurately, "legitimation through the female succession line...to secure patrilinear inheritance." *FHN* I 37 pg. 251.

⁶¹ cf. *FGrH* 90 F103 m, in Stobaeus, *Florilegium* 4.2; transl. *FHN* II 158: a fragment of Nicolaus of Damascus, who was likely quoting a Ptolemaic writer, states: "Aithiopians have a particular respect for their sisters; the kings do not leave the succession to their own but to their sisters' sons." cf. the Election Stela of Aspelta from the Amun temple at Gebel Barkal at the end of the 7th c. BCE, which records the Queen Mother, who is identified with the phrase "his [Aspelta's] mother is king's sister, king's mother, mistress of Kush," making a prayer asking the gods to grant her son Aspelta the kingship; *FHN* I 37.

role as mother is emphasized throughout the episode. While such matrilineal succession is not detailed in the *Alexander Romance*, Queen Kandake’s role as mother is particularly highlighted. The α recension states that she is a widow and mother of three sons, two of whom feature prominently in the narrative of the episode.⁶² She is also linked to Alexander’s own mother Olympias when he first meets her because of her age, stature, and godlike appearance:

δοκεῖν τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον ὄραν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ μητέρα Ὀλυμπιάδα

Alexander seemed to see his own mother Olympias.⁶³

Moreover, Kandake wishes for Alexander to be her own son:

“Ἀλέξανδρε, εἴθε ἦς μου καὶ σὺ υἱὸς καὶ διὰ σοῦ πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν κατεκράτουν·

“Alexander, would that you too were my son and that through you I were ruling all the nations!”⁶⁴

With this statement, Queen Kandake imagines her role as *kandake* (“queen mother”) with Alexander, with whom she too could be *kosmokrator*.

3.3.2 Kandake the Pious

In stature and demeanor, Kandake is presented as a demigod (ἡμίθεον), reflecting the Greek’s view that the Aithiopian’s had a special closeness to gods.⁶⁵ Moreover, she shows deep reverence to Ammon and adheres to his commands, responding to Alexander:

τότε μὲν ἔχρησεν Ἄμμων στρατεύειν εἰς Αἴγυπτον, νῦν δὲ μήτε αὐτὸν κινεῖσθαι μήτε ἄλλον τινὰ ἐπιβαίνειν εἰς αὐτήν, τοὺς δὲ παραγινομένους πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀμύνασθαι καὶ χρῆσθαι ὡς πολεμίοις.

⁶² AR 3.18.

⁶³ AR 3.22.

⁶⁴ AR 3.23.

⁶⁵ AR 3.22. See Diodorus Siculus 3.2.2 for a summary of the Greek view that the Aithiopian’s had a special relationship to the gods, a tradition that can be traced at least as far as the Homeric epics: *Iliad* 1.423-424 and *Odyssey* 1.22-25; the Aithiopians are visited by Zeus and Poseidon because of their feasts. MacLachlan, 1992.

At that time, Ammon ordered us by an oracle to march into Egypt; but now he orders that he is not to be moved and that no one else is to enter the land. We are to defend ourselves against all comers and treat them as enemies.⁶⁶

The entire episode is framed by Alexander's insistence on visiting the Nubian oracle of Ammon, having already visited the oracle of Ammon at Siwa in Libya. Ammon was a Libyan god syncretized to Amun in Egypt and in Nubia, where the supreme deity was particularly worshipped at Jebel Barkal near the Kushite city of Napata at the Fourth Cataract of the Nile.⁶⁷ In Nubian culture, Amun was particularly important for legitimating the king, which is an added dimension to Alexander's request to consult the oracle at the border. Not only is the importance of Amun's oracle for the legitimation of the king known from Nubian sources, but it is also known by Ptolemaic scholars and written about in Alexandrian scholarship.⁶⁸ In Diodorus Siculus 3.2.6.2, quoting Ptolemaic scholar Agatharchides, the Meroitic kings are said to be replaced by the priests when an oracle of the gods commands it.⁶⁹ Diodorus Siculus (or his source Agatharchides) is highly suspicious of this rite, suggesting that because the Aithiopians implicitly trust oracles and commands from the gods, they will believe anything told to them via oracle.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ AR 3.18:

⁶⁷ According to Herodotus, Siwa had a mixed Egyptian-Aithiopian population (2.42.3-4)

⁶⁸ E.g., Nubian sources: *FHN* I 1: Kadimalo inscription from Semna West, 8th c. BCE, the king in the text states, "when Amun nodded his approval (in an oracle) for (my) accession." (transl. Pierce)

⁶⁹ Diodorus Siculus 3.2.6.2; Earlier in Diodorus Siculus (3.2.5.1), he gives a slightly different version of the election of kings, who themselves become gods and are believed to be chosen through the "providence of the divinity" (ὕπὸ τῆς τοῦ δαιμονίου προνοίας). Diodorus Siculus also relates that this practice was abandoned under the rule of Ergamenes (likely the Nubian king Arakamani), who ruled at the same time as Ptolemy II. Ergamenes, who had a Greek education and studied philosophy, invaded the temples, assassinated the priests, and made his own rule.

⁷⁰ Diodorus Siculus 3.2.6.2-3.

As suggested in Queen Kandake's reply to Alexander, oracles were also used by the Nubians for waging war, which is reported by Herodotus, who states that the Aithiopians go to war whenever and wherever Zeus (*i.e.*, Amun) bids them through oracles.⁷¹ As Diodorus Siculus relates, it is part of Nubian culture to implicitly trust and obey in all oracles.⁷² Thus, though Queen Kandake's response is fictional, it coincides with Nubian cultural practices related to oracles as reported in Greek sources. In fact, the Nubian's piety was seen as a reason for the difficulty in conquering them in Ptolemaic scholarship. Agatharchides mentions that the piety of the Aithiopians has protected them from "domination from abroad," stating that "in fact, they have always kept their freedom and live in peace with one another, and although many mighty enemies have marched against them, none has succeeded in his plan."⁷³ As his evidence, Agatharchides mentions Cambyses' failed attempt, as well as Semiramis' and even Herakles' and Dionysos'. Concerning the latter he says, "When Herakles and Dionysos marched against the whole world with their followers, it was only the Aithiopians beyond Egypt that they did not subdue because of the piety of the men and the impossibility of the undertaking."⁷⁴

3.3.3 Kandake the Rich and Black

The wealth of Kandake is emphasized through her marvelous possessions, most of which, as Alexander points out, are products native to Kandake's realm:

‘ταῦτα πάντα ἄξιον θαυμάζειν, εἰ παρὰ τοῖς Ἑλλησιν ἐτύγχανε καὶ οὐ παρὰ σοί, ὅτι καὶ ὄρη τοιαῦτα τυγχάνει ποικίλα’

"It is worthy to wonder at all these things, if they happened to be with the Greeks and not with you, because such great mountains happen to have varied colors."⁷⁵

⁷¹ Herodotus 2.29.7.

⁷² Diodorus Siculus 3.2.6.3.

⁷³ Agatharchides in Diodorus Siculus 1.2.4.

⁷⁴ Agatharchides in Diodorus Siculus 1.3.1.

⁷⁵ AR 3.22.

Thus, Kandake's riches reflect the riches of her Nubia itself.

Moreover, the material richness of Nubia is emphasized through another noted characteristic of Kandake's body and soul. In the pseudo-documentary letter (3.18), Kandake describes her own skin color *vis-à-vis* Alexander's men and contrasts her skin color with the metaphorical color of her soul:

μη καταγνῶς δὲ τοῦ χρώματος ἡμῶν· ἐσμὲν γὰρ λευκότεροι καὶ λαμπρότεροι ταῖς ψυχαῖς
τῶν παρὰ σοῦ λευκοτάτων

“Do not despise our color, for we are whiter and more brilliant in our souls than the whitest among your people.”⁷⁶

This statement not only uses symbolic color language⁷⁷ but also makes intertextual references to passages in Hellenistic texts about Nubian gold mines, linking the natural riches of Nubia to Kandake's body and soul.

As queen of Nubia, Kandake is presumably black. While her blackness is never outright mentioned in the *Alexander Romance*, her son Kandaules is described as *νυκτίχροος*, night-colored or black-as-night.⁷⁸ To the Greeks, the Aethiopians were the prototype for “physical blackness,” known as “the blackest in the world.”⁷⁹ According to Frank Snowden, “in classical thought the blackness of the Ethiopian was only skin deep,”⁸⁰ citing this passage in the

⁷⁶ AR 3.18.

⁷⁷ For an overview of symbolic color language in antiquity, see Byron (2002).

⁷⁸ AR 2.15 *α*-text. Kandaules is called *νυκτίχροος*, dark-skinned or lit. night colored. The text as a crux here and part of the sense is lost. It seems that Kandaules is sitting by a certain lord of the Aethiopians (Αἰθιοπῶν ἄναξ). With both his dark skin tone and his association with another Aethiopians, it is clear that the Kandaules referenced in this passage Kandake's son, who is met later in Book 3.

⁷⁹ Snowden (1960) 31 fn. 69; Blackest in the world: Arrian, *Anabasis* 5.4.4 and Aristotle, *Problemata* 10.66.898b.

⁸⁰ Snowden (1983) 103. This statement does not necessarily pertain to all conceptions of blackness in Greco-Roman antiquity. For instance, when discussing the sexual practices of the Indians, who are described as “black-skinned, like the Aethiopians,” Herodotus claims that the Indian's “semen too, which they ejaculate into the women, is not white like other men, but black

Alexander Romance as well as later Roman and early Christian sources, many of which emphasize “inner whiteness.”⁸¹ While the outer blackness and inner whiteness dichotomy

like their skin, and resembles in this respect that of the Aethiopians” (Herodotus, 3.101.1-2). Despite the inaccuracies of Herodotus’ claim, as pointed out by Aristotle, his claim that Aethiopians had both black skin and black semen adds an exploration of the inner dimension of blackness compared to typical environmental theory of black skin being a result of Aethiopians’ being burnt by the sun due to their geographic location, which was common in classical thought. Aristotle criticizes Herodotus, stating that sperm is “white in all cases and that Herodotus is under a misapprehension when he states that the Aethiopians eject black sperm” (Aristotle, *The History of Animals*, 3.22). In this passage, Herodotus betrays some understanding of skin-color as a phenotypical characteristic associated with genetic material and not (merely) environmental determinism (cf. Hippocrates, *Airs, Waters, Places* 13-17); cf. Munson (2014), who claims Herodotean *ethnos* is cultural except for in “special cases,” in which territory and physical characteristics might distinguish a Greek from a non-Greek. In Herodotus, and certainly in this passage of the *Alexander Romance* (3.18), blackness is a consistent “special case,” even in the case of Colchians (cf. Munson, 2014, 350).

⁸¹ The concept of blackness as deriving from the sun is present in Song of Solomon 1:6, in which the bride states, “I am dark, yet lovely...do not stare because I am dark, for the sun has gazed upon me.” In this case, the bride’s darkness is a temporary, but natural, feature. Origen, taking up environmental theory, comments on this passage, contrasting outer blackness, which is a “genetic inheritance,” and inner whiteness, which comes from an upright heart.” (Snowden (1983) 103. The concept of washing away the blackness of sin and become “whiter than snow” is a Judeo-Christian concept that is found in the Old Testament (Isaiah 1:18; Psalm 51:7).); In the Roman period and early Christian periods, this cultural construct of inner and outer blackness and whiteness became important. This idea of inner and In a 3rd c. CE epitaph in Antinoöpolis in Egypt, Epitynchanon, a black slave from Ethiopia, records that he has black skin but a white soul: “Among the living I was very black, darkened by the rays of the sun but my soul, ever blooming with white flowers, won my prudent master’s good will, for beauty is second to a noble soul and it is this which covered well my black body.” (transl. Snowden (1970) 178; Bernand, no. 26.5-10; Snowden (1970) 19; Schmidt (1897) 100; Geffcken (1916) no. 371; Peek (1960) no. 420 (or no. 1167). Thompson (1989) 41; Westermann (1955): “a remarkable example of the lack of race feeling based upon distinctions of color” (104).); Another example of this tradition, is from the 4th c. CE Latin poet Ausonius of Gallia, who contrasts the darkness of his grandmother’s outward appearance (*cute fusca*) with the whiteness of her soul: “she was not dark in her soul (*atra animo*), which was whiter (*clarior*) than a swan and brighter (*candidior*) than untrodden snow.” (Ausonius, *Parentalia*, 5.3-6; *nomen huic iocularare datum, cute fusca quod olim / aequales inter Maura vocata fuit. / sed non atra animo, qui clarior esset olore / et non calcata qui nive candidior*. “Her name was given her in play, because for her dark complexion she was called Maura in old days by her girl-friends. But she was not dark in her soul, which was whiter than a swan and brighter than untrodden snow.” (transl. Evelyn-White); Rowe (1974) 327-364; Irwin (1974) 1-36; Cameron (1998) 113-11. A third example is of Aethiopian Moses, known as Black Moses, the 4th c. CE Desert Father from Egypt, who is described “as a man whose body was black but whose soul was brighter than the splendor of the sun.” Snowden

flourished in later Roman and early Christian writings, the concept was already a feature of writing about Nubia in the Hellenistic period when describing a Ptolemaic gold mine in Nubia.

In his description of the gold mine, Diodorus Siculus distinguishes the blackness of the Nubian earth with the whiteness of the quartz, from which the gold is mined:⁸²

τῆς γὰρ γῆς **μελαίνης** οὐσης τῇ φύσει καὶ διαφυὰς καὶ φλέβας ἐχούσης μαρμάρου τῇ **λευκότητι** διαφερούσας καὶ πάσας τὰς περι**λαμπο**μένας φύσεις ὑπερβαλλούσας τῇ **λαμπρότητι**⁸³

For the earth is naturally **black**, with strata and veins of quartz that are remarkable for their **whiteness**, surpassing all shining substances in their **brilliance**.⁸⁴

The passage was adopted and adapted in the 1st c. BCE by Diodorus Siculus from a similar account of the Ptolemaic gold mines in Nubia in Agatharchides' 2nd-1st c. BCE text *On the Erythraean Sea*.⁸⁵ While Agatharchides' text does juxtapose the extreme blackness of the outer mineral deposits and the extreme whiteness of the inner deposit,⁸⁶ Diodorus takes creative liberties with the text "in order to better integrate them into his work."⁸⁷ One of the major changes he made to Agatharchides' text in this passage is emphasizing both "whiteness" (λευκότητι) and "brilliance" (λαμπρότητι), while Agatharchides' only emphasizes the quartz's "whiteness" (λευκότητος). While this may seem like a minor change, it is related to an

(1970) 201. Byron (2002) talks about this extensively too. When Black Moses washed away his sins, he also wore white vestments, thus becoming white, in a way, both outwardly and inwardly.

⁸² Diodorus Siculus 3.12.

⁸³ Diodorus Siculus, 5.23.

⁸⁴ Diodorus Siculus 3.12.

⁸⁵ Agatharchides, *On the Erythraean Sea* 5.23 in Photius, *Bibliotheca* 213. *On the Erythraean Sea* was collated from scholarship collected in the library of Alexandria as well as *hypomnemata* (i.e., memoranda or reports) from the Ptolemaic royal archives

⁸⁶ Agatharchides 5.23: τῇ χροῖα μὲν ὄντα καθ' ὑπερβολὴν **μέλανα**, μαρμάρου δὲ ποιοῦντα τοιαύτας ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐκφύσεις ὥστε πᾶν λείπεσθαι τὸ διαμιλλώμενον, τῆς **λευκότητος** κρίσιν οὐκ ἐχούσης; "On the one hand, in color, they [the mineral deposits] are hyperbolically **black**, but on the other hand they are producing such great outcrops of quartz inside of them that everything is found lacking in contention, since its **whiteness** has no comparison."

⁸⁷ Burstein (1983) 38; see also Palm, 27-55.

assumption that Diodorus holds about the sun's role in creating both color diversity and high-quality mineral deposits in nature, which reflects Greek race-thinking about Aithiopians.

Earlier in his work, Diodorus Siculus describes the *varia* of the flora, fauna, and mineral deposits of Arabia, Babylonia and “other countries of the earth which lie in similar climate, such as India and the Red Sea and Aithiopia and certain parts of Libya.”⁸⁸ Diodorus' explanation for this diversity is the “influence of divine fire,” i.e., the “helpful influence and strength of the sun.”⁸⁹ Diodorus gives many examples of the sun's influence on the color and quality of the natural world, one being the precious stones of Arabia whose “whiteness is most brilliant” (ὄν λαμπροτάτη μὲν ἢ λευκότης), because of “the influence of the sun,” which has “made it resplendent (λαμπρόνασα) by its light.”⁹⁰ Thus, the precious stones take on the qualities of the sun itself, which is often characterized as “brilliant” (λαμπρόν) and “white” (λευκόν).⁹¹ The sun's influence on color is a foundation of Greek theories of skin color variation, summarized, concerning the Aithiopians, by Theodectes: “Nearing the borders of these people [the Aithiopians]

⁸⁸ Diodorus Siculus 2.53.4.

⁸⁹ Diodorus Siculus 2.53.1-2.

⁹⁰ Diodorus Siculus 2.53.9. cf. Aristotle, *Meteorologica* 341b 6 ff.

⁹¹ cf. Aristotle, *Meteorologica* 3.1. (377b 10); *Book of Enoch* 14.20.2 (τὸ περιβόλαιον αὐτοῦ ὡς εἶδος ἡλίου, λαμπρότερον καὶ λευκότερον πάσης χιόνος; “and his clothes were like the appearance of the sun, more brilliant and whiter than any snow”), cf. Matthew 17:2; Plotinus, *Enneads*, 2.1.7.22; Origines, *Philocalia*, 27.13. An interesting parallel is in the 2nd c. CE novel the *Life of Aesop* (*Vitae Aesopi*), when Aesop interacts with Nectanebo, the pharaoh of Egypt. Each day Nectanebo comes out with different outfits and asks Aesop what he resembles. On the third day, Nectanebo dresses in a white robe and his advisers in red. Aesop replies: “You are like the sun, and those about you like its rays. Just as the sun, bright and undefiled, dulls the other stars by the light of its rays for those who wish to behold them, in the same way you, wearing a white robe, present yourself pure to those who enter at the appropriate time to look upon you. You are bright as the sun, while these men are fiery red like its rays.” (“σὺ τῷ ἡλίῳ, καὶ οἱ περὶ σὲ ταῖς ἀκτίσι· ὥσπερ γὰρ ὁ ἥλιος, <λαμπρὸς> καὶ ἀμίαντος ὑπάρχων, [οὕτως καὶ σὺ καθαρὸν σεαυτὸν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τοῖς βουλομένοις κατοπτεῦειν] τὴν πύρωσιν τῶν ἀκτίνων ἀμβλύνει, οὕτως καὶ σὺ καθαρὸν σεαυτὸν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις εἰς τὸ δέον ἐλθοῦσιν ἐνατενίσαι <σε> παρέστησας <στολήν λευκὴν> φέρων, καὶ λαμπρὸς μὲν εἷς ὡς ὁ ἥλιος, οὗτοι δὲ διάπυροι ὡς αἱ ἀκτῖνες.” (115); transl. Wills (1997) 210.

the Sun, driving his chariot, discolored the bodies of men with a murky dark bloom, and curled their hair, fusing it by unincreasable forms of fire."⁹² While this passage reflects the Greek's conception of Aithiopians' having a "burnt-face," the dual nature of the name Aithiopian also provides for "bright-face," reflecting the sunlight like quartz resplendent by the sun's rays.⁹³

When Queen Kandake tells Alexander to disregard her color (χρόματος) because her soul is "whiter" (λευκότεροι) and "more brilliant" (λαμπρότεροι) than his men, this is a statement about her race, her character, her piety, and her riches.⁹⁴ Reflecting Diodorus' characterization of the Nubian mines as both black and gleaming like the sun's rays, Queen Kandake embodies her country and its greatest asset—its natural resource, namely gold—through the representation of her body and soul. In this conception she represents a mixed Greco-Egyptian perspective on Nubia, both black and gold. Through these associations, Kandake becomes an allegorical representation of her country.

3.3.4 Kandake *qua* Nubia

The character of Kandake as a rich, godly, black, mother takes on many of the characteristics that the Greeks associated with Aithiopia, her homeland. Kandake, as mentioned above, is a proxy for her homeland, and her body is a proxy for her state. The body-state analogy was common in Greco-Roman political thought with antecedents in Egypt and the Near East.⁹⁵ As outlined by Kantorowicz concerning medieval kingship, the royal two-body paradox—both

⁹² Cited by Strabo 15.1.24. Strabo goes on to discuss this opinion, including its refutations, though eventually lands in general agreement with Theodectes' view.

⁹³ Snowden (1983) 7; Bekerie (2004); Selden (2012) 237-8. The more accepted view is "burnt-face."

⁹⁴ AR 3.18.

⁹⁵ Brock (2013) 69-82. The "body politic," especially the sick body that needs a treatment is found as early as archaic poetry (e.g., Theognis and Solon). Moreover, the concept of "body politic" or the "corporate body" is prominent in Aesop's *The Belly and the Members* (Perry 130), which had antecedents in Egyptian and Near Eastern wisdom literature (Kaufmann, 1996, 61).

divine and natural—was a feature of Egyptian kingship and found purchase in Greek political metaphor, developing a synecdochical relationship of a sovereign’s body *qua* state.⁹⁶ In such a political philosophy, the queen’s body, as a symbol of the state and an “image of society,” must be defended against invasion and pollution, which would threaten sovereignty and order.⁹⁷ The boundaries of the body must be protected to protect the state; and, for the character of Kandake, the boundaries of the state must be protected to protect her body.

In particular, the queen’s body, as a female body, carries with it an increased potential for objectification.⁹⁸ For instance, the violation of borders, both geopolitical and embodied, presents sexual conquest as a metaphor for imperial action, a common trope in European and postcolonial literature and iconography, which has precedents from Greco-Roman antiquity.⁹⁹ One way in which this is articulated is through the personification and feminization of the conquered land, which is won through sexual conquest.¹⁰⁰

The queen’s body could also be objectified through commodification.¹⁰¹ For instance, the fact that Queen Kandake’s body is intertextually associated with Nubia’s natural resources leads

⁹⁶ Ellen (2010) 201; Brock (2013) 1-24. Kantorowicz (2016).

⁹⁷ Douglas (1970) 98.

⁹⁸ Nussbaum (1995): “objectification entails making into a thing, treating *as* a thing, something that is really not a thing” (257).

⁹⁹ Nussbaum (1995) 257 enumerates seven forms of objectifications, with number 5 being: “*Violability*: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in boundary-integrity, as something that is permissible to break up, smash, break into.” For rape as a symbol of border-crossing and an attack on territory, as well as the demarcation of the limits of communities, see Seifert (2018) 9-10. Hall (1993); Leach (2018) 160.

¹⁰⁰ Kolodny (1975); Porter (1986) 232; Hall (1993); McClintock (1994). A famous example from Greco-Roman antiquity are the reliefs from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias, in which the Roman emperor Claudius, depicted in the heroic nude, violates the female personification of Britannia (Whittaker, 2004, 115-143).

¹⁰¹ This form of objectification falls into Nussbaum’s (1995) sixth category: “*Ownership*: The objectifier treats the object as something that is owned by another, can be bought or sold, etc.” (257).

to the potential for ownership. The violation of the feminized embodied landscape through imperial mining is a foundational trope in ecofeminism (or ecological feminism), a branch of feminism that examines the relationships between women, animals, and nature, specifically “women-nature connections.”¹⁰² The ecofeminist lens reveals that the exploitation of nature and animals have been justified by feminizing them and, vice versa, the exploitation of women is justified by animalizing and naturalizing women.¹⁰³ Moreover, the intersection of identities extends the “matrix of domination,” meaning issues of race, class, and gender add complexity to the framework.¹⁰⁴ Through this lens, Alexander’s (and by proxy the Ptolemies’) imperial activities towards Nubia in the *Alexander Romance* could be seen as justified through the “logic of domination,” by feminizing the natural, exotic wonders of Nubia including its gold mines through association with and commodification of Queen Kandake’s female body (and soul).

But does this dualism between her body and her soul truly exist? Ecofeminism fundamentally critiques such dualistic and hierarchical thinking, which justifies and supports “all

¹⁰² Merchant (2020/1980) 43; Meiu (2015) 2; Mets (2018); Stiebel (2001). See also, Ortner (1974). Of particular note is a map reproduced by Haggard in *King Solomon’s Mines*, which depicts “the trajectory to the treasure chambers of the King Solomon’s mines in South Africa as a journey across a female bodily shape. The male explore must pass between the “breasts” to eventually find the treasure in the “vagina.”” (Meiu, 2015, 2). The use of rape metaphors for exploitative mining practices continues into the modern day, as analyzed by Pearson (2017): “The brutal metaphor of sexual assault casts mining as a sudden, jolting act of power, a cruel expression of domination and control. The metaphor relies on a widespread gendered understanding of “feminine” nature savagely under assault by out-of-control, “masculine” technology. This imagery is consistent with metaphors of bodily harm or injury sometimes used to convey concerns about the impact of mining on the landscape, such as when mining is described as “cutting into” and “scarring” the hills or, as quoted above, a “cancer spreading across the land.” Mining is cast as an act of violence that defiles the purity of nature and rural landscape.”

¹⁰³ Adams (1990): “language that feminized nature and naturalized women describes, reflects, and perpetuates unjustified patriarchal domination by failing to see the extent to which the dominations of women, nonhuman animals, and nature are culturally (not just metaphorically) analogous and sanctioned.”

¹⁰⁴ Bilge (2010); Hill Collins (2015).

kinds of domination.”¹⁰⁵ One way in which feminism, including ecofeminism, resists such dualistic and hierarchical thinking is to break the links between “Difference” and domination.¹⁰⁶ Kandake, however, is not a proto-feminist in this way; she does not deny difference but rather inverts difference. First, she articulates a preferential association of her identity to her soul over body through a comparison of her “whiter and more brilliant” soul to Alexander’s (or his people’s) “white” body.¹⁰⁷ This violates the Aristotelian dichotomies of domination: the master/soul/intelligence/male/tamed animal/ruler on the one hand dominating the slave/body/appetites/female/wild animal/subject on the other hand.¹⁰⁸ Without denying her gender or her associations with nature, Kandake subverts the dichotomy and resists alignment with the subjugated. As the case studies below reveal, Kandake is no victim, nor is she subjugated by Alexander. In fact, she bests him, the only one of his opponents who matches his cleverness. When Alexander threatens sexualized violation and weaponizes his “imperial gaze” against Kandake and Nubia, the queen turns the tables on him, inverting sexual mores and turning her own gaze back on Alexander.

4. “Mixing-it-up” and Border (In)Violability

Queen Kandake’s realm has a defined concept of border and territorial inviolability, especially present in the letters between Alexander and Kandake.¹⁰⁹ Alexander orders Queen Kandake to

¹⁰⁵ Sturgeon (1997) 67.

¹⁰⁶ cf. Hartsock (2019/1998), especially ch. 4; Plumwood (1993), especially chs. 1, 2, and 7.

¹⁰⁷ AR 3.18.

¹⁰⁸ Aristotle *Politics*, 1254b l. 4-5 (1.2.11).

¹⁰⁹ On the macro-level, Queen Kandake’s realm is less defined. Her realm exists in the fringes of the Greek *oikoumene*, where “the Greco-Romans did not, or refused to draw a strict boundary line between the southern edge [*i.e.*, Aithiopia]...and the eastern one [*i.e.*, India] (Schneider, 2016, 194). Her realm seemingly borders both India and Egypt. One result of the fuzzy *oikoumenikos* placement of Kandake’s realm is that there are no defining details of the

τόν τε ναόν καὶ (τὸ) ξόανον τοῦ Ἄμμωνος ἀγάγετε ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρια

bring the shrine and statue of Ammon to **the borderland**.¹¹⁰

If she does not, he will enter her territory. Kandake's reply reinforces that Alexander is currently outside of her land and that if he crosses into her land there will be dire consequences:

νῦν δὲ μήτε αὐτὸν κινεῖσθαι μήτε ἄλλον τινὰ ἐπιβαίνειν εἰς αὐτήν, τοὺς δὲ παραγινομένους πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀμύνασθαι καὶ χρῆσθαι ὡς πολεμίοις

But now (he orders) that he is not to be moved and that no one else is to enter into the land, and that we are to defend ourselves against those coming to us and to treat them as enemies.¹¹¹

As divinely mandated, any violation of Kandake's territory will be met with strong defensive action, even for Alexander's purported diplomatic and religious purposes.

Hidden within Alexander's proposition is a threat of sexual violence that renders Alexander's threat to violate Nubia's territorial inviolability as a violation of Kandake's body. At the prospect that Kandake will refuse to bring Ammon, Alexander gives the queen another choice:

εἰ δὲ μὴ βούλεσθε ἔρχεσθαι σὺν αὐτῷ, **συμμίξαντες** ἐν τάχει ἐν Μερῶν συμβουλευσώμεθα

But if you do not wish to come with him [Ammon], let us **“mix it up”** soon in Meroë and consult together.¹¹²

borderland. For instance, there is no mention of the Nilotic context of the border between Egypt and Nubia.

¹¹⁰ AR 3.18; emphasis added. Typically, τὸ ὄριον means boundary/border in singular and frontier in plural.

¹¹¹ AR 3.18.

¹¹² AR 3.18 in the α recension. This line does not appear in later recensions. Stoneman (1991) translates: “If you are unwilling to come with him, we shall soon meet in Meroe and discuss the matter together.” Haight (1955) translates: “But if you do not wish to come with it, let us meet soon in Meroë and have a conference.”

The threat is encapsulated in the many valences of *συμμίξαντες*, which at its root means to “mix together,” with additional meanings including to unite or couple sexually, to meet, to have dealings with, or to engage (in a hostile sense).¹¹³

In the entire α recension of the *Alexander Romance*, a form of *συμμείγνυμι* is only used twice, only one time in addition to this passage. The first appears when Nectanebo recounts to Alexander the circumstances of his conception:

καὶ πῶς εἰσηλθε πρὸς αὐτὴν ὡς θεὸς Ἄμμων καὶ **συνεμίγη** αὐτῇ

and how he [Nectanebo] came to her [Olympias] as the god Ammon and **had intercourse** with her.¹¹⁴

In this context, *συνεμίγη* means sexual coupling. In addition, the word is used only once in the γ recension, where *συμμείγνυμι* replaces *διακορεύω* (“to deflower”) of the α recension when discussing an Amazon’s choice to lose her virginity.¹¹⁵ In this case as well, the term *συμμείγνυμι* is used to refer to a sexual liaison.¹¹⁶ Moreover, in both cases, there is an interethnic quality to the sexual unions.¹¹⁷ Nectanebo, the Egyptian pharaoh, has intercourse with Olympias, an ethnic

¹¹³ LSJ *συμμείγνυμι*; For sexual union: Herodotus 4.114 (see below); for have dealings with: Herodotus 4.151; for meet in close fight: Herodotus. 1.127.

¹¹⁴ AR 1.14 α recension.

¹¹⁵ AR 3.25.

¹¹⁶ An interesting parallel is Herodotus 4.114. In this case, the Scythians have convinced the Amazons to have sex with them over time. Eventually, they join together their camps (*συμμίξαντες τὰ στρατόπεδα*) and live together, each Scythian man with the Amazon he first slept with (*γυναῖκα ἔχων ἕκαστος ταύτην τῇ τὸ πρῶτον συνεμίχθη*). As in the case of AR 3.25, this is not a case of sexual violence (though neither does it constitute enthusiastic consent): *καὶ ἡ Ἀμαζὼν οὐκ ἀπωθέετο ἀλλὰ περιεῖδε χρήσασθαι* (“and the Amazon did not refuse but suffered herself to be fallen upon”). In Strabo 11.5.4, Alexander is said to have had sexual intercourse with (*συμμιζαί*) Thalestria, the queen of the Amazons, in Hyrcania in order to have children, the same goal as the Scythians in Herodotus, though Strabo does not accept the story.

¹¹⁷ A derivative word *συναναμίγνυσθαι* often denoted “intermingling with other nations” in biblical contexts (LXX Hos 7:8; Θ Dan 11:23; *Life of Moses* 1.278), through which the nation of Israel would lose its purity (See also Philo, *Life of Moses*, I, 278). (Bromiley, 1964, 852-855; Birge, 2002, 47-48).

Epirote and Macedonian queen. Alexander, a Macedonian, would “mix it up with” Kandake, the Nubian queen. The Amazons, being an exclusively female race, can only “intermingle” with foreign men, which is emphasized in *AR* 3.26:

εἴ τις δ' ἂν διακορευθῆ ὑπὸ ἀλλογενοῦς

if any [of the Amazons] should be deflowered by men of another race.¹¹⁸

The Amazons themselves share a strong sense of territorial integrity/inviolability in the *Alexander Romance*, having the only other territory in addition to Kandake’s realm that has a defined borderland (τὰ ὄρια).¹¹⁹ In the Amazons’ letter to Alexander, they state that

καὶ ἐρχόμεθα εἰς συνάντησιν ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρια

“we join battle in the borderland”

and that

εὐρήσεις δὲ ἡμῶν τὴν παρεμβολὴν ἐπὶ τῶν ὀρίων.

“you [Alexander] will find us ready for battle in the borderland.”¹²⁰

Alexander responds:

εἰ μὲν οὖν θέλετε ἀπολέσθαι καὶ ἀοίκητον τὴν χώραν τὴν ἑαυτῶν γενέσθαι, μείνατε ἐπὶ τῶν ὀρίων.¹²¹

“If you want to be destroyed and your land become uninhabitable, remain at the borderland”

Their border is made even clearer, because it is delineated by a river and has a rigid gender dichotomy—only females (human and creature) can inhabit their territory.

¹¹⁸ cf. Herodotus 4.114 and Strabo 11.5.4 above. This may be why συμμίγνυσθαι is seen more commonly with reference to Amazons.

¹¹⁹ *AR* 3.25, 3.26.

¹²⁰ *AR* 3.25.

¹²¹ *AR* 3.26.

The Amazons, to whom Alexander marches immediately after his encounter with Kandake, ultimately capitulate instead of allowing their territory to be violated by Alexander and his men. To stave off Alexander, the Amazons pay him tribute and give him individual warriors, whom they recognize may be “deflowered” through contact with Alexander’s men. Keeping their territorial borders inviolate is more important than the virginity of any one woman. For the Amazons, their territory, untouched by any man or male creature, mirrors their culturally mandated virginity. The territory becomes body, which must remain unviolated.

For Kandake, the prospect of Alexander crossing the border, especially using disguised sexual language, is an existential threat to her territory, to which the queen responds severely:

ὕπαρχομεν δὲ εἰς πλῆθος σκυτάλαι [π´] ἐν ἐτοίμῳ πρὸς τοὺς ἐπιόντας κακοποιεῖν

“We have [eighty] squadrons ready to do harm to those who attack us.”¹²²

Nevertheless, Alexander still visits Meroë but only in disguise and after securing an invitation from Kandaules, the son of Queen Kandake, for rescuing his wife, who had been kidnapped and raped by the king of the Bebrykes.¹²³ Ultimately the sexual violation of a member of Queen Kandake’s family is the only way in which Alexander is able to penetrate Nubia.¹²⁴ Moreover,

¹²² AR 3.18. There is no number of σκυτάλαι in α recension, π (“eighty”) is from β recension. Σκυτάλαι means “staff” and has been translated variously, including phalanxes (Haight) and flame-throwers (Stoneman). Clearly, it is some type of military unit. This threat defies Greek expectations of her ethnicity and gender. Strabo emphasizes the Nubian’s peaceful nature: “the whole of the country is similarly disposed to peace” (17.53). Effeminacy was a grave insult in the ancient Greek imaginary, expressed in the *Alexander Romance* as lack of courage to go to war with Alexander. For instance, after the Athenian orator Aeschines argues for friendship with Alexander, the orator Demades accuses him of making “effeminate and cowardly arguments, urging us not to stand up to Alexander in war?” (AR 2.2). Compare Kandake’s brave rebuke of Alexander to the reaction of Polykratos, the ruler of Thessalonica, when Alexander was approaching his borders. Instead of defending his border and fighting Alexander, he sends gold, silver, his son, and a letter, in which he claims his enslavement to Alexander (AR 1.26).

¹²³ AR 3.19-20. Kandaules’ wife was found in the bed of the tyrant.

¹²⁴ Kandaules’ wife is named Marpessa in the α recension and Harpisa in the β recension. The names derive from two verbs with the same meaning (and likely the same root): μάρπτω: take

his actions in helping the daughter-in-law save him from the consequence of his own violation.¹²⁵

Moreover, Alexander receives his invitation from Kandaules in disguise, which violates the tenets of consent. Alexander, disguised as Antigonos, acts as an envoy (τὸν ἄγγελον) and carries a letter (γραμμάτων) to the queen. An envoy was part of the “border apparatus” itself¹²⁶ and was meant to have certain protections and privileges to cross into enemy territory.¹²⁷ In Alexander’s words,

βασιλεὺς γὰρ ἀγγέλους οὐ κτείνει

“A king does not kill a messenger.”¹²⁸

Alexander as Antigonos, thus, had two protections as he crossed into Kandake’s territory—as invited guest of Kandaules and as envoy. If Kandaules had known his true identity, it is likely that he would not have been invited into Kandake’s territory.

When Alexander and Kandake do συμμιζαντες (“mix-it-up”) in Meroë, there is no outright sexual union, though there are suggestions towards intimacy. Upon Kandake’s introduction to Alexander, she takes his hand (λαβοῦσα τῆς χειρὸς τὸν Ἀντίγονον Κανδάκη) and

hold of, seize; ἀρπάζω: snatch away, carry off; seize hastily; ravish. In both cases, Marpessa/Harpisa’s name reveals that her identity in the text is no more than her violation.

¹²⁵ He is protected twice in Meroë for saving the queen’s daughter-in-law: first, when the queen admits to recognizing Alexander and he threatens to kill himself; and second, when Kandaules protects Alexander against his own brother (*AR* 3.22).

¹²⁶ Nail (2016) names messengers, ambassadors, and couriers as part of the “border apparatus” in the medieval period (96). While the situation is quite different in this context, letters were the primary form of diplomatic communication and required mobility to function, which necessitated a messenger.

¹²⁷ The protection of messengers and envoys is known as early as *Iliad* 1.334. Nevertheless, Alexander himself abuses messengers (*AR* 1.27). Messengers in the *AR* are routinely abused: e.g., 1.27; 1.35; 1.37.

¹²⁸ *AR* 1.37.

shows him alone into a bedroom (κοιτῶνας).¹²⁹ This gesture alludes to both sexual union and marriage. The only parallel to this gesture—a woman putting her hand out to a man—in the *Alexander Romance* again concerns the liaison of Olympias and Nectanebo. When Nectanebo overhears Philip doubting Olympias’ “divine” pregnancy, he transforms himself into a snake and enters the dining room where Olympias and Philip are dining and where he finds Olympias:

ἡ δὲ τὸν ἴδιον ἔραστὴν ἰδοῦσα Ὀλυμπιάς ἀνακαθίσασα τῆς κλίνης προέτεινε τὴν δεξιάν· ὁ δὲ ἐξεγείρας ἑαυτὸν ἐπέθηκεν ἑαυτοῦ τὸ γένειον εἰς τὴν χειρᾶ, τὸ δὲ ὅλον σῶμα πρὸς τὸν κόλπον ... προβαλὼν τὴν δίχληλον γλῶτταν κατεφίλησεν αὐτήν, τεκμήριον στοργῆς καὶ φιλίας πρὸς τοὺς θεωμένους καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν Φίλιππον ἐπιδεικνύμενος· καὶ ταῦτα πράξας πρὸς ἔνδειξιν ἀφανῆς ἐγένετο.

But Olympias, seeing her own lover, sitting up from her couch stretched out her right hand. He [Nectanebo as a snake], rearing up, placed his chin in her hand, and [...] his whole body against her breast, sticking out his forked tongue he kissed her, showing a sure sign of affection and love to the spectators and Philip himself.

Through the gesture of Olympias putting out her hand to her serpentine lover and receiving embraces and kisses from him, the text references their sexual liaison, itself later described with the same verb as συμμίζαντες.¹³⁰ Moreover, Nectanebo is in disguise during this action, just like Alexander will be with Kandake.

The gesture also has sexual overtones outside of the *Alexander Romance*. The grasping of hands between bride and groom and the leading of the new spouse into a bedroom was also an important part of the Greek marriage ceremony, though the action was initiated and led by the groom.¹³¹ The grabbing of the hand (or more commonly wrist) has overtones with abduction and

¹²⁹ Recension α recension only has τῆς χειρὸς, while β and γ recensions specify the right hand. I have chosen to stick with the earliest recension.

¹³⁰ AR 1.14 α recension; As stated above, this is the only other time it is used in the α recension. καὶ πῶς εἰσῆλθε πρὸς αὐτήν ὡς θεὸς Ἄμμων καὶ συνεμίγη αὐτῇ

¹³¹ Flory (1978) 70-71; Jenkins (1983) 140. This is described in Euripides’ *Alcestis* (915-917) when Admetus remembers his wedding: “Once with pine-torches from Mount Pelion and bridal songs I entered, holding the hand of my dear wife” (τότε μὲν πεύκαις σὺν Πηλιάσιν / σὺν θ’ ὑμεναίοις ἔστειχον ἔσω / φιλίας ἀλόχου χέρα βαστάζων). Later he references the bed chamber

captivity, signifying the power the groom has over his bride.¹³² Kandake inverts this tradition by grasping Alexander's hand and leading him into a bedroom. Later in the same chapter, she repeats the action, leading Alexander by the hand to her own bedroom (καὶ κατέχουσα αὐτὸν <τῆς χειρὸς> εἰσφέρει εἰς τὸν κοιτῶνα αὐτῆς).¹³³ Through Kandake's inversion, she takes the role of the groom and wields power over Alexander. Συμμίζαντες, in this case, will not result in the domination of the woman.

In Kandake's bedroom, there is no sexual liaison. Instead, through their conversation—another meaning for συμμίζαντες—she overpowers Alexander by revealing his disguise, besting him, and showing herself superior to his other adversaries who fell for the same trick, namely Darius and King Porus of India.¹³⁴ Queen Kandake makes a victory speech at the trembling Alexander:

‘τί τρέμεις; τί τετάρᾳσαι; ὁ Περσολέτης, ὁ Ἰνδολέτης, ὁ καθελὼν τρόπαια Μήδων καὶ Πάρθων νῦν χωρὶς πολέμων καὶ στρατείας ὑποχείριος ἐγίνου Κανδάκη βασιλίση· ὥστε γίνωσκε, Ἀλέξανδρε, ὅτι ὅστις δοκεῖ τῶν ἀνθρώπων φρονεῖν μέγα, ἄλλος μείζονα τούτου τὴν φρόνησιν σχῆ’.

“Why are you trembling? Why are you so agitated? You, destroyer of the Persians, the destroyer of the Indians, the one having taken trophies from the Medes and the Parthians, now without a battle and expedition, you were in the hands of Queen Kandake. Know this then, Alexander, that whoever of men thinks he is exceedingly clever, another has more wisdom than he.”

(κοίτας), which is desolate now that his wife has died. This practice did not always take place in official wedding ceremonies. For instance, in Euripides' *Ion*, Creusa uses the same language when discussing the illegitimate conception of Ion with Apollo: λευκοῖς δ' ἐμφὸς καρποῖσιν /χειρῶν εἰς ἄντρου κοίτας (“grasping my white hands in yours, you led me to a bed chamber of a cave”).

¹³² Redfield (1982) 192; Jenkins (1983) 140.

¹³³ *AP* 3.22; emphasis added.

¹³⁴ Alexander visits the Persian court in disguise (*AR* 2.14-15). While he was eventually recognized by a man who had seen him in Pella when he served as an ambassador, Darius was not informed until after Alexander had escaped. Alexander also visits King Porus of India as his own messenger (3.3).

In her speech, Kandake claims her role as victor. As a result, Alexander makes a toothless threat, playing on yet another meaning of συμμίζαντες— “to meet in close fight, come to blows, engage.”¹³⁵ Alexander states: ‘ἐὰν εἶχον τὸ ξίφος μου, ἀνήρουν σε πρώτην, ἵνα μὴ ὑπῆρχόν σοι ὑποταγείς, εἶτα <ἐμαυτόν, διότι> ἐμαυτοῦ προδότης ἐγενόμην’ (“If I were carrying my sword, I would kill you, so that I would not be made subject to you; then <I would kill myself, because> I betrayed myself”).¹³⁶ In Alexander’s imagination, their pseudo-marriage would have been consummated in an entirely different συμμίζαντες, a murder-suicide. Alexander would rather die than be the subject of anyone, especially a woman.¹³⁷ Even in this Kandake bests him. Unlike in Alexander’s *tête-à-tête* with King Porus of India, in which he stabs the great king in the chest with his sword,¹³⁸ Alexander has no weapon; this absence is a further emasculation.

In response, Kandake shows him great clemency because of the good deeds Alexander had performed for her son and daughter-in-law. Treating him like one of her own children and protecting him from harm, Kandake promises to keep Alexander’s secret and gives him protection and extensive gifts. Alexander cannot be said to have defeated Kandake or subjugated Meroë in the *Alexander Romance*. As Diodorus Siculus states, “Although many powerful enemies have marched against them [the Aithiopians], none has met with success,”¹³⁹ including Alexander. His threat of συμμίζαντες may have been meant as a violation of body, but Kandake—and all women—exist as more than a body. She also has a sharp and cunning mind,

¹³⁵ TLG συμμείγνυμι II.3.

¹³⁶ AR 3.22 *a* recension.

¹³⁷ The Amazons will play on this insecurity in the next episode. In their reply to Alexander, the leaders of the Amazons state: κὰν πολεμίων κρατήσωμεν ἢ φύγωσιν, αἰσχρὸν αὐτοῖς καταλείπεται εἰς ἅπαντα τὸν χρόνον· ἐὰν δὲ ἡμᾶς νικήσωσιν, ἔσονται γυναῖκας νενικηκότες; “If we conquer the enemy or put them to fight, that is regarded as a humiliation for them for the rest of time; but if they conquer us, it is only women that they have defeated.” (AR 3.25).

¹³⁸ AR 3.4.

¹³⁹ Diodorus Siculus 2.2.4.

with which she bested the great conqueror. Similarly, a state is more than its borders or its territory. A single invasion, a single border crossing will not take down Nubia. Nevertheless, Kandake grants him extensive gifts and allows him to visit the Nubian oracle of Ammon, an act which subsumes Nubia into Alexander's world-empire by establishing Nubia as a tributary state. This flexibility models Ptolemaic imperial action in Nubia, allowing the regime to construct a subjugated Nubia through the collection of tribute without decisive military conquest.

5. Alexander's "Imperial Gaze" and Kandake's Commodification

Alexander's imperial project, however, was more all-encompassing than military conquest and tribute collection. His desire or *pothos* for empire manifested as an insatiable thirst for knowledge, especially of other countries, cultures, and wonders with the ultimate goal to "reach the edges of the known world."¹⁴⁰ This *pothos qua* "universalistic imperial ideology" would "remain the foundation of the ideologies of subsequent universalistic empires of the Ancient World," including the Ptolemaic empire.¹⁴¹ In the *Alexander Romance*, Alexander's *pothos* for seeing and knowing was more important than conquering or colonizing, especially in Book 3, in which Alexander is more Herodotus than conquering hero, implementing an "imperial gaze" at and beyond the edges of the *oikoumene*.¹⁴² Nubia, embodied as Queen Kandake,

¹⁴⁰ Alexander's *pothos*, or a longing or yearning for an unattainable goal, first appears in Aristobulos' account of Alexander the Great. Following Aristobulos, Arrian claims Alexander's *pothos* was the driving force of his personality and the key to the success of his campaigns. For *pothos* as the driving force of Alexander's career, see Ehrenberg (1965). See also Anson (2009) 983. Strootman (2022), however, argues that the "word and concept *pothos* was Arrian's rendering of genuine Hellenistic imperial cosmography," tied to a "universalistic imperial ideology" for world conquest (189).

¹⁴¹ Strootman (2022) 194.

¹⁴² The "imperial gaze" was proposed by E. Ann Kaplan in her 1997 monograph *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze*, stating "The imperial gaze reflects the assumption that the white western subject is central, much as the male gaze assumes the centrality of the male subject" (78-79). The concept of "the gaze" (*le regard*) has been highly theorized Sartre (1956); Lacan (1998); Foucault (1994); Foucault (1995); Butler (2006)

becomes the object of Alexander's gaze, a sexualized objectification that creates value in the body "predominantly for its use to (or consumption by) others."¹⁴³ Paraphrasing Lacan, it is in the realm of the visual that Alexander establishes his desire.¹⁴⁴

The frame for Alexander's relations with Queen Kandake and the entire Nubian episode is his desire to see the world-renowned palace of Semiramis (ἐπιθυμητικῶς γὰρ αὐτὰ εἶχε θεάσασθαι; "for **he was desirous** to gaze at it").¹⁴⁵ Later in the Nubian episode, Alexander, in disguise as his general Antigonos, restates his desire to Kandaules, the son of Queen Kandake (κἀγὼ γὰρ ἐπιθυμῶ θεωρῆσαι τὴν πόλιν; "for **I desire** to behold the city").¹⁴⁶ Both link Alexander's desire (ἐπιθυμητικῶς/ἐπιθυμῶ) to the scopic¹⁴⁷ realm (θεάσασθαι/θεωρῆσαι).

Through this autopsy, Alexander presents himself as ethnographer, historian, and geographer. In fact, Alexander's role of ethnographer and historian is on display in his first letter to Queen Kandake, in which he shares his knowledge of Nubian history with the queen.¹⁴⁸ Alexander's prior knowledge of Kandake and her realm is gained using his senses, both hearing (ἤκουσα) and seeing (εἶδον), the traditional methodology of ancient historians and geographers, notably Herodotus.¹⁴⁹ While Herodotus ends his autopsy at the First Cataract of the Nile and

¹⁴³ Frederickson and Roberts (1997) 173-206.

¹⁴⁴ Lacan (1973) 97: "le désir s'instaure ici dans le domaine de la voyure"

¹⁴⁵ AR 3.18.1.

¹⁴⁶ AR 3.20

¹⁴⁷ The term scopic comes from the Latin *scopium*, which means to look at or examine. The term is used by Lacan to mean "something aimed at or desired" by a subject in a visual interaction with the other.

¹⁴⁸ Alexander reveals that he has learned about the political history of Egypt and Nubia as well as gained architectural knowledge of Nubia from Egyptian priests (AR 3.18). For instance, he states that Kandake had previously conquered Egypt, which suggests an awareness of the 25th dynasty, in which the Kushite Empire dominated Egypt for nearly a century; cf. Budka (2021); *FHN* II 85, n. 196.

¹⁴⁹ AR 3.18.3; Much of Alexander's knowledge about Nubia and Kandake was likely gleaned from such ethnographic, historical, and geographic texts. As mentioned above, there are parallels in the text with Agatharchides, Bion, Diodorus Siculus, and Herodotus. For autopsy in

relies on oral reports for all areas upriver, Alexander extends his autopsy to the fringes of the *oikoumene*, aligning his travels to Kandake’s palace with his universal imperial ideology constructed through his personal *pothos*.¹⁵⁰

In his journey into Nubia, Alexander recounts the wonders he witnesses, using the language of autopsy (*e.g.*, “ἔβλεπε, “he saw” (3.22); Ταῦτα ὁρῶν ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος ἀπεθαύμαζε, “upon seeing these things, Alexander was filled with amazement” (3.22)). He notes that Nubia’s wonders are “peculiar marvels” (ὡς ἴδια θαύματα) and “not like those of the Greeks” (οὐχ ὡς παρ’ Ἑλλήσιν), especially emphasizing the mountains, crystals, trees, fruit, and creatures of “many colors and strange shapes” (μυρία ποικίλα τῆ χροῶ καὶ ξένα τῆ μορφῆ).¹⁵¹ Kandake herself shows off (ἐδείκνυεν) her treasures and the wonders of her palace.¹⁵²

During Kandake’s tour of her palace, Alexander, however, reveals his “imperial gaze,” making a statement that enrages the queen:

‘ταῦτα πάντα ἄξιον θαυμάζειν, εἰ παρὰ τοῖς Ἑλλήσιν ἐτύγχανε καὶ οὐ παρὰ σοί, ὅτι καὶ ὄρη τοιαῦτα τυγχάνει ποικίλα’

“It *would* be worthy to marvel at all these things, if it happened to be among the Greeks and not with you, because it happens that (your) mountains have such a great diversity of colors.”¹⁵³

Not only does Alexander insult Kandake’s treasures, but he also insinuates that they could only be worthy of marveling at if they were among the Greeks—if he took them away. This parallels

Herodotus, see Armayor (1985); Marincola (1987) 121-123; Hartog (2009/1988) 260-173; Lateiner (1989) 145-162; Anhalt (2008); Miltsios (2016), *et al.*

¹⁵⁰ Herodotus 2.29.1.

¹⁵¹ AR 3.21. This description of the wonders of Nubia are a further link to Diodorus Siculus’ description at 2.53.

¹⁵² AR 3.22.

¹⁵³ AR 3.22. Italics added.

his *tête-à-tête* with King Porus of India about the philosophy of desire, in which Alexander states:

ἐπει οὖν οἱ Ἕλληνες ταῦτα οὐκ ἔχομεν, ὑμεῖς δὲ οἱ βάρβαροι ταῦτα κέκτησθε, ἐπιθυμοῦντες τῶν κρείττωνων οἱ Ἕλληνες ἤλθομεν ἀφ' ὑμῶν αὐτὰ κεκτῆσθαι.

“Since then the Greeks do not have these, and you the barbarians do have them, we the Greeks, desiring better possessions, have come to take them from you.”¹⁵⁴

According to his own philosophy of desire, his knowing and seeing has the ultimate goal of consuming and dominating.

Kandake’s resultant anger is tied to the implications both for her country’s natural resources and for her own objectification. As discussed above, the text has Kandake representing herself in terms of Nubia’s natural landscape, especially in the richness of the black earth and the gleaming minerals within the landscape, a feature that Alexander finds wonder in during his visit to the palace. When Alexander says her treasures would only be truly wonderful “among the Greeks” (παρὰ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν) while alone with the queen in a bedroom context, the proposed objectification of Nubia’s natural resources becomes sexual. At threat is both her body and the natural resources of her country.¹⁵⁵

Kandake, however, has her own gaze, which she employs as a defense against Alexander. On first hearing (ἀκούσασα) about the great deeds of Alexander, Queen Kandake desires to see

¹⁵⁴ AR 3.2.

¹⁵⁵ Alexander does successfully objectify and commodify Kandake through the two “gift”-tributes he receives. Ultimately, Alexander will successfully take ownership over part of Kandake’s and Nubia’s natural resources through the gift-tribute he receives from her. The goods include gold, slaves, animals and animal skins, jewels, pearls, ivory, and ebony. AR 3.18 and 3.23. This is similar to the list of Nubian tribute in the Nubian nome list of Ptolemy VI; *FHN* II 137; Urk. II, 116.9-13; Hölbl 1994, 78. f.; 166 f.; LD IV, 27b; PM VI.229-231 (241); A. Giammarusti and A. Roccati (1980) 104f. cf. Callixenus’ description of the Grand Procession of Ptolemy II Philadelphus in Athenaeus 5.196-203.

the great conqueror and orders an artist to surreptitiously paint a portrait of Alexander for her.¹⁵⁶ In this action, Kandake reveals her own desire for knowledge. When Alexander shows up at Kandake's palace in disguise, she recognizes him from the portrait, which allows her to call him by his real name when he becomes enraged at her recognition. Upon his denial, she shows him the portrait: "Now I will show you" (ἄρτι δέ σοι δείξω). Kandake makes Alexander confront his own identity through gazing upon the portrait, asking "Do you recognize your own image?" (ἐπιγινώσκεις τὸν σεαυτοῦ χαρακτήρα;). In this recognition scene, Kandake bests the great conqueror.

As Sartre observed, "the Other is not only the one whom I see but the one *who sees me*."¹⁵⁷ When he perceives Kandake's gaze upon him, Alexander's immediate reaction is trembling and to imagine a future where he would kill both Kandake and himself, so that he "would not be made subject" to Kandake.¹⁵⁸ Alexander relates Kandake's gaze to subjugation. Alexander's fear and anger at being the object of Kandake's gaze shows that the act of gazing is not neutral, and thus his own autopsy was not neutral. He was not merely provoked by wonder but by his desire for empire and to become a *kosmokrator*. Kandake's painting transforms him from subject of desire to object of desire, which he realizes at the very moment of gazing on his own portrait. Lacan states that "in the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, *Je suis tableau*."¹⁵⁹ The gaze objectifies; autopsy objectifies. When Kandake objectifies him (*Alexander est tableau*), he would prefer death. As discussed in the next section, autopsy,

¹⁵⁶ AR 3.19.

¹⁵⁷ Sartre (1956/1943) 266. Italics original.

¹⁵⁸ AR 3.22.

¹⁵⁹ Lacan (1998/1964) 106, transl. Sheridan. Sheridan translates *Je suis tableau* as "I am a picture." Given the importance of the painting in this episode, I prefer "I am [a] painting."

ethnography, travel, etc. are not neutral, especially in the context of imperialism. Like in the case of Alexander and Kandake, however, the “imperial gaze” sometimes reveals more than expected.

5.1 Modeling the Ptolemaic “Imperial Gaze”

If Kandake is an allegory for Nubia, the character of Alexander represents not only his own imperial ventures but also the Hellenistic kingdoms, specifically the Ptolemaic regime in the context of Nubia. As this episode reveals the identity and character of Alexander, it also reveals the Ptolemaic regime. As mentioned above, through the crowning of Ptolemy I as king in Alexander’s absence, the Kandake episode has clear Ptolemaic overtones. Moreover, Alexander’s pursuits in Nubia in the *Alexander Romance* provides a model for or a reflection of the Ptolemaic imperial project in Nubia, especially concerning its “soft” elements, including the acquisition of ethnographic and geographic knowledge as well as its production and reproduction.¹⁶⁰

Just as Alexander’s “imperial gaze” is not neutral, Ptolemaic ethnographic, geographic, historiographical, and academic interest in Nubia was not neutral. It was not learning for learning’s sake but instead was a prominent feature of the Ptolemaic imperial project. The collection, production, and reproduction of knowledge concerning Nubia acted not unlike a literary natural history museum, noted as a modern repository for “colonial ideologies and narratives.”¹⁶¹ As Strootman argues, the “preoccupation with exotic, rare and stupendous things

¹⁶⁰ For the imperial role of “academic” disciplines in Hellenistic courts, see Strootman (2017) 133-146. Another important parallel is the collection of “gift” tribute. Kandake participates in the “soft” imperial power of the Hellenic world in other ways, such as the employment of a Greek painter to capture the likeness of Alexander (*AR* 3.19). A certain King Ergamenes of Nubia, who reigned during the rule of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, is reported by Diodorus Siculus, following Agatharchides, to have received instruction in Greek philosophy (Diodorus Siculus 3.6.3). This suggests the influence of Hellenic arts and culture in Nubia even in the early Ptolemaic period.

¹⁶¹ Findlen (1994); MacKenzie (2009); Das and Lowe (2018) 4. cf. Ashby and Machin (2021). In fact, encyclopedic natural history museums have a similar bent as the *Alexander Romance*, to

from far away countries, evidently had a political dimension.”¹⁶² Part of the political dimension was to display the regime’s mastering of the *oikoumene* and the universal imperial ideology at the foundation of the Ptolemaic regime. The collection, production, and reproduction of such knowledge at Alexandria transformed the Ptolemaic capital into the center of the *oikoumene*, transforming the city into a *kosmopolis* and its ruler(s) as *kosmokrator*.¹⁶³ Not only did the collection of this knowledge rely on and assist in Ptolemaic imperial activities in Nubia, but it also functioned as symbolic subjugation—owning the produced image as tantamount to owning the real thing.

Parallel to Alexander’s autopsy, knowledge about Nubia was collected by Ptolemaic explorers, travelers, agents, and military officials and brought back to Alexandria, where it was published in literary texts in the library of Alexandria or as *hypomnemata* (*i.e.*, “memoranda,” *e.g.*, notes, reports) in the Ptolemaic royal archives. While most of these writings have been lost, references and fragments of the accounts from agents of the Ptolemaic state-sponsored

collect the *oikoumene* in one place. As Edward O. Wilson said about the American Museum of Natural History: “This is a museum that has thought big about the world” (Wilson, 1995, 18, cited in Luke, 2002, 101).

¹⁶² Strootman (2017) 143.

¹⁶³ While the English word cosmopolitan and cosmopolis have Greek roots, it is not itself a Greek word, though *κοσμοπολίτης* (“citizen of the world”) is used by Philo of Alexandria (*On the Creation* 3.4; 142.2; 143.2; *On the Giants* 61.2; 106.2; *et al.*) and Diogenes Laertius (6.63). Alexandria in the role of *kosmopolis* is first displayed in Callixeinus’ passage about the grand procession of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, a veritable mobile collection of imperial display (Athanaeus 5.196-203); for the grand procession, see: Rice (1983); Foertmeyer (1988); Hazzard (2000); Goyette (2010); Johstono (2016); Keyser (2016); Kuzmin (2018); for Alexandria as *kosmopolis*, see Fraser (1972); Anton (1977); Hirst and Silk (eds.) (2004).

exploration of Nubia are extant,¹⁶⁴ including Dalion,¹⁶⁵ Aristocreon,¹⁶⁶ Bion of Soloi,¹⁶⁷ Basilis,¹⁶⁸ Simonides the Younger,¹⁶⁹ and Timosthenes.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, scholars in Alexandria used the reports and writings of these agents in their own writings, including in writings constructing the Hellenistic conception of the *oikoumene*. For instance, Eratosthenes,¹⁷¹ the

¹⁶⁴ This list comes in part from Pliny's list of reports on Akthiopia's measurements (Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 6.183. *FGrH* 666 T1). The reports from travelers and imperial agents in Nubia mainly belong to the early Ptolemaic period, before the revolts in Upper Egypt at the beginning of the 2nd c. BCE, which likely cut off any access for Greeks into Nubia.

¹⁶⁵ *FGrH* 666: "The fragments of his work indicate that he explored – possibly in the service of Ptolemy II – the upper Nile Valley to an undetermined distance south of Meroë during the second or, less likely, third quarter of the third century BC. He was the first of the Hellenistic explorers of Nubia to write on the basis of his travels a work entitled *Aithiopia* in more than one book that the fragments indicate dealt with the ethnography, geography, and animal life of the region."

¹⁶⁶ *FGrH* 667: Likely traveled to Nubia and wrote his account in the second or third quarter of the 3rd c. BCE. The extent of his travels is unknown but probably were the main source for his account of Aithiopia, which had a particularly literary character. He also referenced Herodotus and provided solutions to geographical problems in Herodotus. See also, *FHN* II 103 and 104.

¹⁶⁷ *FGrH* 668: Traveled in Nubia sometime in the second or third quarter of the 3rd c. BCE, probably in Ptolemaic service. He wrote an account of Nubia based on his travels, called the *Aithiopia*. While little is known about the organization of the text, it seemed to have contained at least two books. The first book discussed the kingdom of Kush and its institutions. "Viewed as a group, however, the fragments indicate that the *Aithiopia* was intended to be a comprehensive account of the geography and ethnography of Nubia based on Bion's own travels supplemented by the accounts of his predecessors including Aristocreon that covered the whole region from the First Cataract of Syene as far as the Gezira and east to the Red Sea." Bion's *Aithiopia* was the standard work on the subject and was used by Eratosthenes, Agatharchides, and possibly Juba. See also, *FHN* II 105, 106, 107, 108.

¹⁶⁸ *FGrH* 718: listed by Pliny as having estimated Ethiopia's size, but it is unknown whether Basilis traveled to Nubia. Possibly, he should be included in the list of scholars compiling, interpreting, and reproducing knowledge. Basilis also wrote about India. Basilis is a female name and may have been a female historian or scholar.

¹⁶⁹ *FGrH* 669: Probably lived between 270s BCE and the end of the 3rd c. BCE. "He lived in Meroë—perhaps while serving as a Ptolemaic agent—for a period of five years and wrote a book about Aithiopia on the basis of his experiences."

¹⁷⁰ *FHN* II 100: The commander of the fleets for Ptolemy II Philadelphus and reported that the journey from Syene to Meroe took sixty days (Pliny *NH* 6.183). "Timosthenes (3rd c. BCE) wrote a work *On harbours* in the form of a 'periplus' (sailor's handbook)." Only known through quotations of later authors.

¹⁷¹ *FGrH* 241: Eratosthenes hailed from Cyrene and studied philosophy in Athens. He was summoned to Alexandria by Ptolemy III Euergetes, while already a noted scholar, and was

chief librarian at Alexandria during the reigns of Ptolemy III and Ptolemy IV, shifted Greek geography to a “cartographically-oriented description of the *oikoumene*” in his *Geographika*.¹⁷²

This new vision of the *oikoumene* was embedded in the Ptolemaic imperial project, using Ptolemaic-Egyptian reference points for its global calculation and employing a Ptolemaic agenda for conceiving *oikoumene*.¹⁷³

While there is no extant evidence that the Nubians returned their own gaze onto the Ptolemies as Kandake did to Alexander, scholars working in Alexandria did not always represent Ptolemaic imperial practice in Nubia positively. For instance, Agatharchides (fl. 2nd c. BCE)¹⁷⁴ wrote through a critical, even hostile, lens about the Ptolemaic regime in Nubia in his work *On the Erythraean Sea*, which “treated in five book the history, ethnography, and geography of the southern portion of the *oikoumene*.”¹⁷⁵ Agatharchides recognized and highlighted the brutality of

appointed the head of the library of Alexandria. Thus, he had full access to the resources of the library, which he used fully in his scholarly works. Known as the “pentathlete” (*i.e.*, all-arounder) for his breadth and occasional dilettantism, Eratosthenes wrote prodigiously in the fields of philosophy, poetry, history, astronomy, literary criticism, and geography. *FGrH* 86 T1, *Suda* s.v. Ἐρατοσθένης.

¹⁷² See Kosmin (2017) for a full treatment of Eratosthenes’ embeddedness in Ptolemaic imperial ideology. Kosmin (2017) 88.

¹⁷³ Kosmin (2017) 86.

¹⁷⁴ *FGrH* 86: Agatharchides was a 2nd c. BCE scholar. After emigrating to Egypt, he became protégé of Kineas, an official and advisor of Ptolemy VI, and later the personal secretary of Herakleides Lembos, another Ptolemaic official, scholar, and diplomat. These roles provided him with personal and professional ties to leading Ptolemaic imperial agents in the Alexandrian court. This gave him access to the Ptolemaic royal archives, which he used to write his *On the Erythraean Sea*, a text in five books that explored the history, ethnography, and geography of the Red Sea coast and Nubia. While much is lost, extensive selections of the first and fifth books were preserved in Codex 250 of Photius’ *Bibliotheca*, which is translated and handled in Burstein (1989).

¹⁷⁵ *FGrH* 86, “Biographical Essay.” While much of the work is lost, there are significant preserved passages, especially from the first and fifth books, the latter of which preserves a comprehensive account of the “history and cultural geography of both the African and Arabian coasts of the Red Sea and their hinterlands. *FGrH* 86, “Biographical Essay.” Likely, the first four books treated Ptolemaic activity in the region, likely including Ptolemy II’s Nubian campaign of the 270s BCE. Agatharchides never finished *On the Erythraean Sea*, because he was sent into

the Ptolemaic imperial regime, especially through the suffering and ruin experienced by individuals at the hands of the empire.¹⁷⁶ His criticism can be found throughout Book 5, especially in the case of political prisoners forced into a wretched existence in a Nubian gold mine, where he explicitly states his criticism: “As for those who have been overwhelmed by extreme misfortune, these people the tyrannical government condemns to the bitterest slavery, that of the gold mines.”¹⁷⁷ Is it a coincidence that Agatharchides’ prime example for Ptolemaic imperial brutality is the Nubian gold mines, the passage that influenced Kandake’s

exile amongst other intellectuals in 145 BCE by Ptolemy VIII, likely for finding himself on the wrong side of the civil war between Ptolemy VIII and his sister Cleopatra II: Agatharchides, *On the Erythraean Sea* 5.112: “But we [Agatharchides] have entirely given up the idea of writing an account of the islands in the sea which were discovered later, the peoples beyond these and the aromatic substances which grow in Trogydytice since our age is unable to similarly bear the toil, particularly after we had written large works about Europe and Asia and because we have been unable to accurately examine the *hypomnemata* as a result of the disturbances in Egypt.” He spent the remainder of his life in Athens. It is a common enough to ask a Classicist which work they would save from the vagaries of time. For me, I think I would want the complete *On the Erythraean Sea*. I believe a full account of Ptolemaic imperial activities in Nubia using privileged material from the royal archives would completely rewrite Ptolemaic history and especially the Mediterranean focus of studies of Ptolemaic imperialism. Ptolemy II’s Nubian campaign is treated by most accounts of early Ptolemaic imperialism at best as a small footnote to his Mediterranean activities, but I think this text would reveal a much more sophisticated Nubian and Red Sea policy.

¹⁷⁶ For Agatharchides’ criticism of the Ptolemaic empire, see Burstein (1989) 28-29; Gozzoli (1978); Sartori (1984). Other examples include the hunters risking their lives to capture a snake as a gift for Ptolemy II, to the obsessive, “prison-like existence” of the topaz miners, and to the unfounded hope of the elephant-transporters, trapped on their shipwrecked boats slaughtering each other. In fact, Book 5 starts with an extended prologue (5.21) about how one ought to properly “recount the extreme misfortunes that have befallen some men.” For more examples of Ptolemy II as a harsh master, see Burstein’s comments *FGrH* 86 F 20a. Burstein argues that because these views are apparent from early in his text, his negative views towards Ptolemaic imperialism were likely not influenced by his personal experience of persecution under the Ptolemaic regime. Might these views, however, contributed to his eventual exile?

¹⁷⁷ Agatharchides, *On the Erythraean Sea* 24a; For Agatharchides’ criticism of the Ptolemaic empire, see Burstein (1989) 28-29; Gozzoli (1978); Sartori (1984). Other examples include the hunters risking their lives to capture a snake as a gift for Ptolemy II, to the obsessive, “prison-like existence” of the topaz miners, and to the unfounded hope of the elephant-transporters, trapped on their shipwrecked boats slaughtering each other.

characterization of herself in the *Alexander Romance*? Agatharchides used his privileged position and access to the royal archive to turn a mirror on the Ptolemaic regime, revealing its identity through the exploration of the Other.

6. Conclusion

Since the *Alexander Romance* is an “open text” and thus cannot be dated precisely, it is impossible to know the extent of influence the text had on the Ptolemaic regime, if any. Certainly, the text was influenced greatly by, if not originated in, Ptolemaic literary culture, including legends concerning Alexander’s Egyptian paternity and the great *kosmokrator* Sesonchosis. Moreover, the Kandake episode seems to reflect knowledge gained from early Ptolemaic ethnographic and geographic exploration in Nubia. Ultimately, the Kandake episode of the *Alexander Romance* is a highly allegorized interaction between Egyptianized Hellenistic universal imperial ideology and Meroitic Nubia, which seems to reflect Ptolemaic imperial practice and ideology from as early as Ptolemy II.¹⁷⁸

The Kandake episode transgresses the expectations of hegemonic, patriarchal imperialism. In such a system, one would expect the “Othered” queen to be defeated through violence and then enslaved, subjugated, or killed. What exists is quite different. Throughout the

¹⁷⁸ While little is known about Ptolemy II’s Nubian campaign, his interest in Nubia followed traditional models of Egyptian kingship, including Sesostris I (the model for Sesonchosis), Thutmose I, Psammetich II, as well as Greek mythological models Herakles and Dionysos and the legendary model of Semiramis and likely Alexander the Great. While geographic and ethnographic inquiry was prominent throughout Ptolemaic rule, the accounts related to Nubia are especially prominent in the early Ptolemaic period following Ptolemy II’s Nubian campaign. Moreover, Ptolemy II maintained a tributary relationship with Nubia, e.g., The Great Procession of Ptolemy II in Athenaeus 5.196-203; the Nubian nome tribute lists in the Temple of Isis (*Urk.* II 12.27; *FHN* II 112. Török (2009) 386-387; Žabkar (1988) 65). Agatharchides notes that “knowledge about this country [Nubia] has been more accurate” since the time of Ptolemy II (quoted in Diodorus Siculus 1.37.5). For the Ptolemy II’s Nubian campaign: Theocritus, *Id.* 17.87; SB I 5111, III 6134 (*FHN* II 97); Diodorus 1.37.5, quoting Agatharchides, Book 1 of whose *On the Erythraean Sea* is thought to cover the campaign (Burstein, 1989).

episode, Alexander veils his true intentions through diplomatic language and disguise. When he enters Kandake's territory in disguise he clouds himself in metaphorical darkness and his true character is not revealed until he enters the core of Nubia—Queen Kandake's palace.

This theme of disguise and shrouding the inner truth in darkness, which is present throughout the *Alexander Romance*, reveals the power in holding knowledge and wisdom.¹⁷⁹ The border itself acts as a veil shrouding the gleaming wonders inside the Nubian territory. The text itself is a disguise. The pseudo-documentary status of the epistolary exchange between Alexander and Kandake suggests an attempt at disguising the fiction of the letters to lend authority to the text. The intertextual relationship between Diodorus Siculus and the *Alexander Romance*, suggests an interest in veiled language and references. Even the placement of the text in the Third Book following Alexander's campaign in India acts as a disguise of the geographic location of Nubia.

Finally, the *Alexander Romance* itself acts as a disguise—a fictionalized account of Alexander's life. In particular, the Kandake episode, when mined, can reveal the framework of the Ptolemaic imperial project in Nubia through an intersectional, ecofeminist lens, at least in part. Unlike the embeddedness of the sovereign king in nature explored in Chapter 2, the gender and nature divide fall along the binary affinities proposed under ecofeminism. This reveals a conceptual distinction between the concept of gender and nature in either Alexander's sovereignty and imperial practice or in the Greek (though likely Greco-Egyptian) literary *milieu* in which it originated.

¹⁷⁹ It also shows a unifying literary theme *contra* Dowden (1989) 650: "its literary qualities doubtful."

Following the revelation of the painting, Queen Kandake says to Alexander the Great, “It is not by fighting that you have overcome so many enemies and cities but by your cleverness.” This is a final clue to revealing Ptolemaic imperialism. It is through cleverness—seeing double,¹⁸⁰ embedding themselves in the Egyptian “ecological triangle,” supporting scholarship that centers the Ptolemaic kingdom, funding ethnographic research, popularizing and disseminating the worship of Isis, reimagining geographic thought, supporting and expanding Egyptian religious culture, creating literary models of imperialism, etc.—that the Ptolemies find success. The true Ptolemaic imperial project lies in ideology.

¹⁸⁰ Stephens (2003); Moyer (2011).

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has aimed to contribute a new paradigm for understanding the ideology of the border between Egypt and Nubia in the Ptolemaic period through a gendered and human-ecological lens. It started with the question: What is revealed about the ideology of the Ptolemaic border between Egypt and Nubia when focusing on gender? This question was influenced by a conceptual affinity between borders and gender, namely that they are both fluid (literally in the First Cataract) and performative through a “stylized repetition of acts.”¹ It was further influenced by Gloria Anzaldúa’s metaphorical use of the swamped border to reify the fluidity of identity, including gender. The dissertation has extended this conceptual affinity between borders and gender by exploring the ways in which they intersected in practice. Focusing on gender revealed the conceptual interconnection of gender and nature, especially the inundation, in the specific political, cultural, and religious *milieux* of Ptolemaic Egypt. As a result, the dissertation broadly dealt with the question, “How were gender, nature, and their interconnections used in the ideology of the Ptolemaic Egyptian-Nubian border?”

The first chapter argued that gender fluidity, namely the practice of reimagining and transcending the gender binary, became a principal feature of the Ptolemaic theology of Isis at the Egyptian southern border through which the Ptolemaic dynasty constructed their sovereignty. The second chapter investigated the response to the inundation crisis of the mid-240s BCE in the First Cataract region and argued that Ptolemy III took on a role of inundation king performing a form of masculinity, which I call ecomasculinity, that promoted a relationship of embodied association to and interconnectedness with nature. The third chapter explored the Myth of the Sun’s Eye as a border myth, arguing that the popular myth placed the First Cataract border as a

¹ Butler (2006/1990) 191; Johnson et al. (2011) 66-67; Salter (2008).

site of transformation and transcendence which centered the border and the pacification of Nubia in Egyptian universal kingship and Ptolemaic imperial ideology. The fourth case study revealed a different bordering strategy between Egypt and Nubia in the Kandake episode of the Alexander Romance (3.18-24) which employed gendered portrayals of the Nubian border that subverted expected power dynamics, suggesting a heterogeneity in Ptolemaic construction of geopolitical and postmodern borders. Throughout these gendered and human-ecological case studies, this dissertation found that the Ptolemies used the ideological border between Egypt and Nubia, especially the First Cataract border, to legitimate their rule in Egypt and create a foundation for their empire beyond Egypt, crucial for both the success and longevity of the Ptolemaic dynasty.

While the focus on gender may seem to be a limiting factor, it has turned out to be an expansive and generative intervention. The focus on gender has increased the complexity of the study of the border, transforming it into a highly interdisciplinary and methodologically eclectic project. For instance, it led to the incorporation of evidence that, at first, was less obviously related to the construction of the border, namely theological and fictional evidence. Not only has this expanded the amount and type of evidence available, but it has also resulted in Egyptian evidence standing at the forefront of much of the dissertation, which has revealed for instance the importance of Egyptian theologies and pharaonic conceptions of borders in the Ptolemaic period. This is crucial for understanding the border holistically. Moreover, the focus on religious and literary materials has shown that conceptions of borders, both those long held since pharaonic times and those developed and transformed under the Ptolemies, were deeply ingrained in the cultural, social, and religious imaginaries of Egypt.

One important result of focusing on gender is the insight that nature, especially the inundation, had a central place in the conception of the border between Egypt and Nubia. As a

result, this dissertation has argued that the inundation and the Egyptian “ecological triangle”—the interconnectedness of sovereign(s), gods, and nature—was the foundation for the ideology of the border between Egypt and Nubia at the First Cataract. As a response to the confluence of gender and nature in the border ideology, I experimented with ecofeminism as a conceptual tool for the dissertation. Broadly, ecofeminism claims that the affinity between women and nature leads to the “mutually reinforcing relationship between the devastation of nature and the domination of women.”² Ultimately, ecofeminism cannot function as a theoretical model for the ideology of the First Cataract. In a critique of ecofeminism in Chapter 2, I have argued that the king’s association with the inundation (and not his domination of nature) imbued him with sovereign power as a function of the Egyptian “ecological triangle.” This is not to say that ecofeminism has no explanatory function in the ideological conception of the border between Egypt and Nubia. In Chapter 4, I have argued that, in accordance with the basic tenets of ecofeminism, Queen Kandake’s association with the natural world of Nubia in *Alexander Romance* 3.18-24 provides the potential for mutually reinforcing exploitation of the queen, Nubia, and its natural material wealth by Alexander the Great. Thus, the dissertation contributes to the scholarship of ecofeminism by providing examples of various iterations of the relationship between gender, nature, and power, which seem to be divided along cultural or linguistic lines in a multicultural society.

The first part of the title of this dissertation—*Flooding Borders*—emphasizes two overarching conceptions of the project—the plurality and fluidity of borders, both of which are innovative approaches to the study of the Ptolemaic Egyptian-Nubian border. When considering

² Maruyama (2003) 178. For good overviews of ecofeminism, see Li (1993); Bile (2011); Khalil (2018); Vakoch and Mickey (2018); Bassham (2021).

the border region between Egypt and Nubia, it is impossible to speak of a singular border, whether geographically or ideologically. Was the border at Elephantine, Philae, and/or Maharraqa? Did it delineate territory, authority, and/or identity? Was it a zone, a line, an island, and/or a process? Was it static, kinetic, and/or movable? Was there a distinction between the Egyptian border and the Ptolemaic imperial border? Through a functionalist lens, there were military, economic, religious, political, and ideological borders, each of which had their own nature and intersected with each other in various ways. A postmodern lens reveals even more borders—of gender, divinity, nature, ethnicity, and identity. Not only can these geographic, ideological, and postmodern borders have fluidity, the borders between Egypt and Nubia were, in most iterations, conceived of as literally fluid, encompassing the inundation waters of the Nile at the First Cataract, which was imagined as the source of the Nile inundation in the Egyptian theological system. Ideologically, the natural cycle that constructed the border's flowing waters manifested as the effective relationships between the sovereign(s), nature, and the gods—the Egyptian “ecological triangle,” the foundation of the Egyptian sovereign's cosmological and political legitimacy.

Flowing from this conception of plurality and fluidity, the dissertation, especially in Chapters 1, 2, and 3, has proposed a new way to conceive of the ideological border at the First Cataract, namely that it distinguished Egypt *qua* Egypt. While the First Cataract border may have coincided with the imperial border (*tšš*), which marked the extent of the Egyptian sovereign's authority (*tššw*, empire), the First Cataract functioned separately. This distinction has important stakes for understanding Ptolemaic sovereignty in Egypt and the Ptolemaic imperial project beyond Egypt. As an ideological border, the First Cataract constructed power and organized political authority more than it delineated space. It was a site at which the inundation was

created, kingship was confirmed, Egypt was secured, and the empire was activated, anchoring the Ptolemaic Egyptian universal imperial ideology to the Nile's inundation and the effective functioning of the Egyptian "ecological triangle," which has been explored especially in Chapter 3.

In a very different conception of the border, Chapter 4 has shown that pharaonic conceptions of imperialism served as a model for Hellenistic perceptions of the border between Egypt and Nubia. In the Kandake episode of the Greek *Alexander Romance*, Alexander imitates Sesonchosis, the legendary Egyptian pharaoh based on the Middle Kingdom pharaoh Sesostris, by extending Egyptian authority (*tšw*, empire) to the limits of the *oikoumene* (or the "four corners of the earth/heaven" in Egyptian) through the transgression of enemy borders (*ḏrw*) and the bringing in of the limits (*in ḏrw*) through the receipt of tribute. In this conception of the border, when that goal was met, the ruler would be *kosmokrator* ("ruler of the world") in Greek or *nb r ḏr* ("ruler of the world" or, literally, "lord to the limit") in Egyptian, an appellation given to few mortal rulers in either language (e.g., Sesonchosis/Sesostris, Alexander the Great, Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II, and Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos; whether the last two deserved the title is debatable). This suggests an alternative form of border strategy in the Ptolemaic period that employs pharaonic models beyond the "ecological triangle" of the First Cataract.

This dissertation makes a number of important contributions towards understanding the Ptolemaic border between Egypt and Nubia, Ptolemaic imperialism, Ptolemaic royal ideology, and Ptolemaic perceptions of gender and nature, a few of which I enumerate here. First, it provides the first study of the ideology of the Nubian-Egyptian border in the Ptolemaic period as well as the first study centering the intersections of gender and nature in Ptolemaic studies. Second, the dissertation has shown that the flooded borders between Egypt and Nubia were not

merely a contested frontier but an accumulation of ecological, cosmological, theological, cultural, ethnic, social, economic, intellectual, and political intersections that had significant stakes in Ptolemaic sovereignty in Egypt and Ptolemaic imperial ideology. Third, it forefronts gender, especially gender fluidity, as an ideological tool employed by the Ptolemies, which contributes a new view of gender in Ptolemaic sovereignty beyond Ptolemaic queenship.

Fourth, this dissertation contributes an original conceptual and methodological framework for the study of the borders in Egypt as well as Ptolemaic sovereignty and political ideology. It models an eclectic, interdisciplinary approach by integrating diverse sources such as Egyptian theology, temple texts and decorations, and Greek fiction into a topic that is typically discussed in terms of topography, economy, architecture, administration, and military exploits. Moreover, it contributes a new corpus of scholarship on the Egyptian-Nubian ideological border in the Ptolemaic period through a gendered and gender-ecological lens. Fifth, it contributes the view that Ptolemaic ideology of kingship was anchored in the border between Egypt and Nubia, both as the source of the Nile inundation and as the launching point for the subjugation of Nubia, whether real or imaginary. Sixth, it incorporates an ecological perspective into the political and cultural ideology of the Ptolemaic regime through attention to the “ecological triangle” and various forms of nature-gender affinities in the border ideology. Seventh, the dissertation models an intervention in the conception of the Ptolemaic empire by distinguishing Egypt from its empire in the African context. While this is a conventional view of the Ptolemaic empire in the Mediterranean, the dissertation shows that the same distinctions and care is needed in the African context. More generally, this dissertation has contributed new approach to Ptolemaic imperialism that works to counterbalance the Mediterranean-focus of contemporary Ptolemaic studies.

This dissertation opens many new questions and new avenues for future study. For example, what is the perception of the First Cataract border outside of the First Cataract region? How did it function in the religious imaginary in Egypt and beyond? How did the perceptions of the borders change throughout the Ptolemaic period, especially after the Great Secession? How did the conception of the border between Egypt and Nubia change during the Roman period? Was the ideology of the Nubian-Egyptian border affected by Roman conceptions of borders and frontiers? Did the shifts in the administrative policy of the Dodekaschoinos in the late Ptolemaic period relate to the shift in the epigraphic habit of Philae in the 1st c. BCE? Do these changes suggest a shift in border policy? What might that say about Ptolemaic imperialism in this period? How can the Egyptian “ecological triangle” change the scholarly perceptions of Ptolemaic sovereignty? How can ecomasculinity be used to understand Ptolemaic kingship? Was the Ptolemaic ideological relationship with nature the same or different from other Hellenistic dynasties? What is the distinction between Greek and Egyptian perceptions of nature? How influential are Greek conceptions of nature in Ptolemaic Egypt? Since attitudes about nature are cultural, how are they affected by cross-cultural interaction in the multicultural *milieu* of Ptolemaic Egypt? How did the ideology of the border between Egypt and Nubia manifest in the broader Mediterranean?

Ultimately, this dissertation has shown that the Ptolemaic Nubian-Egyptian border was ideologically important in the construction and performance of Ptolemaic sovereignty and empire. Moreover, the dissertation has shown that an interdisciplinary approach, not only centering Egyptian and Greek sources but also a broader range of sources including religious and literary texts, is necessary for studying Ptolemaic history. Furthermore, it has shown the value in centering gender and nature in the study of the Ptolemaic empire. These contributions have

important stakes for understanding the political, cultural, and religious history of the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt and its empire in Africa, the Indian Ocean, the Near East, and the Mediterranean.

APPENDIX 1. KHNUM'S SANDAL

As the inundation god, Khnum was said to oversee the release of the Nile inundation, as personified by the god Hapy, who spent the year in the caves (*kr.ty*)¹ under the cataract waters.² Khnum's role as controlling the floodgate is described in the "Famine Stele:" "Khnum is the deity there, [...] his sandals placed on the flood, holding the door bolt in his hand, opening the (flood)gates as he wishes."³ According to this passage, Khnum resides above the two caverns in which Hapy, the inundation god, sleeps. A gate barricades the flood in the deep, and Khnum controls the gate with his hands and his feet. His sandals act as a gate itself, resting on the flood and controlling its measure. His hands hold the door bolt, itself a sacred object.⁴

The imagery of Khnum's sandal over the inundation is present in other texts of the Ptolemaic period. For instance, on the walls of the Edfu temple, the king, called the "great noble," "makes the flood-Hapy flow for him at the beginning of the New Year, causing the flood-Hapy to rise out of his cave under the sandals of the Lord of the Crowns [Khnum]." In the same inscription, Khnum, called the "lord of the Cataract" is called the one "under whose

¹ *WB* V, 58. Herodotus places these springs between Syene and Elephantine (Herodotus 2.28).

² For a discussion of the Hapy and the Ptolemies, see Recklinghausen (2014).

³ Simpson (2003) 388.

⁴ A door bolt was a sacred object, associated with the eye of Horus and the finger of the god Seth (Eaton, 2014, 42). In pAmun 3, 8; Guglielmi and Buroh, 1997: 120, 147; Eaton, 2014: 53): "The finger of Seth is removed from the eye of Horus. It is well." Eaton states that the priest was "repairing the moon, associated with Horus' injured eye, and thereby perpetuating the lunar cycle" (Eaton, 2014, 53). This was part of the Daily Ritual and the Ritual of the Royal Ancestors cycle, which ultimately also influenced the solar cycle and the cycle of the inundation. The extraction of the door bolt is a preliminary step to the opening of the doors to the shrine or temple, which symbolizes "the opening of the cosmic "double door," that is, the point at the horizon where heaven and earth meet and through which the sun emerges at dawn" (Lorton, 1999, 138-139).

sandals the Hapy flood comes out of his cave to vivify the gods and men.”⁵ Here, we see Khnum’s role in the inundation take on the same roles as his creator deity identity.

What exactly the function of Khnum’s sandal is not clear in the “Famine Stele.” It is said only to be resting. Another somewhat unlikely source helps to elucidate the issue – a fragment of the Greek lyric poet Pindar (c. 518 – c. 438 BCE). From a fragment of Pindar, found in a scholion of Aratus’ *Phainomena*, a colossal statue (“hundred fathom statue”) controls the Nile flood with his feet (“from the movement of whose feet the Nile floods”).⁶ That the deity takes the form of a statue is an interesting detail, which Ian Rutherford links to the colossal statues of Abu Simbel visited and graffitied by Greek mercenaries.⁷ This same imaginary is repeated centuries later by Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines* 1.5:

In Aithiopia, where it [the Nile] takes its rise, a divinity is set over it as its steward, and he it is who sends forth its water at the right seasons. This divinity has been painted so as to seem heaven-high, and he plants his foot on the sources, his head bent forward like Poseidon.⁸

While neither Pindar nor Philostratus place the colossal deity with his foot on the flood at the First Cataract, the associations with the “Famine Stele” suggest that the tradition came from the First Cataract and the divinity should be associated with Khnum. The enormous size of the deity seems to be a practicality of representation, for to have foot large enough to cover the source of the Nile flood would require a colossal body. Moreover, the colossal statues of Abu Simbel and the colossal statues of the Aithiopian Memnon (representing Amenhotep III) in the Theban

⁵ È. Chassinat, *Edfou* II, p.67 (5-12). Transl. adapted from Zaki (2009) #3.

⁶ Ian Rutherford (2013); Rutherford (2012); Philostratus also cites this fragment two times (Porphyry fr. 421T in Smith, 1993). Rutherford links the colossal figure to the giant statues at Abu Simbel, which were visited by Greek mercenaries.

⁷ Rutherford (2013).

⁸ Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines* 1.5, transl. Fairbanks.

Necropolis may also have influenced the Khnum to be portrayed as a colossal statue in the Greek imagination.⁹

The sandal has a function in ritual subjugation and power over enemies and territory. One such function, known from the sandals of Tutankhamun and New Kingdom and Roman period mummy sandal representations, was the trampling of bound enemies and scorpions. On these objects, bound prisoners or scorpions would be represented on the sole of the sandals, so that the enemy would be trampled underfoot with every step.¹⁰ This ritual subjugation is also found in texts, such as a reference in the Pyramid Texts: “Geb has put his sandal on the head of your foe, who flinches from you.”¹¹ The subjugation of the enemy, especially the bound prisoner, however, does not fit the context of this text.

A function of sandals that fits somewhat better is the concept of subjugation of territory. For instance, on the footstool of Tutankhamun, there states, “Every foreign land is under your sandals.”¹² Closer in time and space is the inscription of Isis addressing Ptolemy III in the lintel of Door B of the Temple of Isis at Aswan in the First Cataract: “I have placed all foreign lands for you under your sandals.”¹³

Gods too can come under foot, though sandals must be assumed. In the Demotic magical papyri, the magical practitioner can have power over the gods of Egypt: “[I am...] of earth by

⁹ Bonneau (1964) claims that the Egyptian’s penchant for colossal images (whether gods or deified pharaohs) stem from this control of the Nile, which is why they stood on the edge of the river or in the plain. She suggests that during the flooding of the Nile, the floodwaters would approach the feet of the statues and would thus be associated with the action of the gods controlling the flood.

¹⁰ Ritner (1993) 120-129.

¹¹ Pyramid Text spell 356, 578, in Faulkner 1969, p. 114.

¹² Ritner (1993) 134.

¹³ Bresciani (1978) 42-43. On the same lintel, Isis is identified as she “who subjugates foreign countries for the lord of the two lands under his sandal.”

name, under the soles [of] whose [feet] the gods of Egypt are placed.”¹⁴ In the *PGM*, a charm to retain the god uses the trampling language: “*Charm to retain the god*: When he comes in, after greeting him, step with your left heel on the big toe of his right foot, and he will not / go away unless you raise your heel from his toe and at the same time say the dismissal.”¹⁵

While the Nile flood is neither an enemy nor a foreign country, it is a god, Hapy. The imagery of Khnum controlling the flood with his sandal speaks more to his power than to the identity of the subjugated. Seemingly, Hapy does not have his own control over the timing of his release. He is self-creating but not self-releasing.

Other deities seem also to have had their feet and/or sandals over the Nile. In the temple of Isis at Philae, an inscription states: “And your son Horus rejoices to have [removed] the evil of Douqa, for the Nile has come out under your feet, divine limbs, and you have supplied the two lands.”¹⁶ The deity here is Osiris, which is clarified on the same wall: “The king of the south and of the north, the autocrat [=Augustus] comes to you, Osiris, great god, lord of Philae.”

Another deity identified in the same position is Amun-Re, about whom is said: “When he enters, the two caverns are under his feet. Nile goes forth from the grotto beneath his sandals.”¹⁷ This portion of the hymn (the 600th chapter) characterizes Amun-Ra as a physical amalgam of various deities of mythological allusions: “His soul is Shu, his heart is [Tefnut(??)]” and “His right eye is day, his left eye is night.” His feet are not identified as a deity but rather as the

¹⁴ Ritner (1993) 134-5.

¹⁵ *PGM* IV 1052-1057; Betz (1986) 59.

¹⁶ Chassinat (1903) 154; Dümichen, *Recueil*, III, 49, 1-2; Bénédite, *Philae* t. I, p. 91 (Tableau XIII, *soubassement* of east wall, exterior of the great temple) decorated under Augustus and Tiberius = PM 379-380: “Base, Augustus followed by Nile-gods and Field-goddesses before Osiris-Onnophris and Isis, with text above, Berlin photos 545-50).

¹⁷ P. Leiden I 350 XIX (Hymn to Amun); Bonneau (1964) 230; Gardiner (1906) 38-39; Budge (1914) 214-220. The verso of the papyrus is dated to the 52nd year of Ramses II. Gardiner states that the verso “cannot be put much later than the recto” (pg. 13).

location and role. The location is the two caverns, or the 1st Cataract, and the role is associated with the flooding of the Nile. Ultimately, parts of him (“he that is in it”) are characterized as the Nile itself. The sky god Amun-Re, through his association with the Nile flood, can impregnate his wife *Īḥt* (the fertile land), which allows Amun-Ra to “birth to all things that are, making to live what exists.”¹⁸

Khnum’s feet are important in another of his canonical tasks – the use of the potter’s wheel. In images of Khnum’s pottery, Khnum operates the potter’s wheel with his feet while he uses both hands to shape the human being. The operation of such a wheel requires measure and the creation of cyclical movement to create life, not unlike the measure and the creation of cyclical movement to create the inundation and thus life throughout Egypt. In this way, the Nile becomes the potter’s wheel of Egypt.

¹⁸ This is similar to the inscription Martzolff Ph.2-110b in the interior of the doorway of Pylon II: “Osiris is Hapy (=the inundation), Isis is Sekhet (=the field).”

APPENDIX 2. THE TEMPLE OF SATIS ON ELEPHANTINE AND THE WORSHIP OF THE INUNDATION

The early cult site to Satis seems to have been associated with a hole created by the cataract whirlpool and surrounded by three granite boulders.¹ On this site, a mudbrick sanctuary was built, which dates to either the late predynastic period (3200-3100 BCE)² or the early dynastic period (3050-2180). The sanctuary thus had two distinct portions, the “Revealed Realm” of the goddess, accessible to dedicants, and a subterranean “Hidden Realm,” a cave-like grotto accessible only to the king and the purified priests as the king's proxy.³ The cave may have symbolized an entrance to Duat, or the underworld, and certainly ritualized the sacred waters of the inundation, which flowed around and below the temple.⁴ Royal and non-royal votive offerings have been found at the site dating to this early period and the early Old Kingdom, which include pebbles in the form of pregnant or nursing women, suggesting that she was a fertility goddess.⁵

The temple was completely rebuilt nearly a thousand years later by Monthuhotep II (c. 2025 BCE), the first pharaoh of the Middle Kingdom. While the rock niche was given up, the central water aspect of the temple was maintained with the addition of a large basin-like pool in the center of the temple's courtyard.⁶ This pool was the center of a large festival celebrating the onset of the Nile's inundation, which was unmistakably associated with Satis in this period. Less

¹ Kaiser (1998) 26.

² Kaiser (1998) 9; Smith (2013) 119.

³ Smith (2013) 119.

⁴ Smith (2013) 119 suggests: “Perhaps the boulders symbolized Akhet, where the god is made manifest, while the grotto represents the entrance to the Duat – the Secret Chamber where mortals could not travel.”

⁵ Kaiser (1998) 9; Pinch (2002) 187.

⁶ Kaiser (1998) 49.

than a hundred years later, Sesostris I rebuilt the temple again with lavish decorations, a large festival courtyard, and completely out of limestone.⁷ His decorations and inscriptions focus on the Nile inundation festival. For instance, there is a large relief representing the festival in the temple showing the procession on the Nile; the king participating in the festival rituals; the priests' activities, including wading in the sacred pool; and the runners, who announced the coming of the inundation to the rest of Egypt.⁸ The relief shows Sesostris I and Satis enthroned and facing each other. Their legs overlap, possibly "intended to suggest the sexual union of the king and the goddess, perhaps in connection with the river procession."⁹ A room nearby the temple held a basin-like pool, which was flooded from another basin outside of the room during the ritual of the Nile's inundation. The room was constructed to be especially watertight, suggesting the entire room was flooded, recalling the Nile's own flood.¹⁰ The festival courtyard was designed to slope downwards so that water could flow down through channels to the congregated population of Elephantine. There was even a water channel leading down to the street, so that all of Elephantine's people could welcome the flood.¹¹

In the New Kingdom, the temple was further expanded by Hatshepsut and Thutmose III (ca. 1490-1440 BCE).¹² Unusually for Egyptian temples, the sanctuary was in the middle of the temple and not in the back. This is likely to accommodate placement over the spot where the watery cavern and original three boulders of the temple sat. There was even a 4-meter shaft in

⁷ Kaiser (1998) 50.

⁸ Kaiser (1998) 50.

⁹ Kaiser (1998) 50.

¹⁰ Kaiser (1998) 52.

¹¹ Kaiser (1998) 54.

¹² The Khnum temple was also expanded and was substantially larger than the Satis temple by this time.

the sanctuary that linked it to the ancient subterranean cult site.¹³ Reliefs on the rear wall of the room suggest a pairing of deities: on the right, Anukis leads Thutmose III to Khnum; and to the left, Satis leads Hatshepsut to Amun.¹⁴ Reliefs on the exterior of the temple show scenes from the festival of the Nile's inundation, including the Nile procession and priests standing in a basin-like pool.¹⁵

The temple of Satis was likely damaged by the Persians in 343 BCE. In 168 BCE, in the Ptolemaic period, the New Kingdom Satis temple was fully dismantled, and a new temple to Satis was commissioned on the same plan.¹⁶ In the late Ptolemaic or early Roman period, a staircase Nilometer, which measured the Nile inundation, was added along the Nile in front of Satis' temple. While the Ptolemaic temple of Satis does not seem to have a representation of the Nile inundation festival as did Sesostri I and Thutmose III, an inscription from Elephantine describes Ptolemy IX's visit to the island and his participation in a sacred ritual related to the Nile and Hera *Teleia* (the Greek name for Satis).¹⁷ Although Khnum had taken precedent and had a larger temple, Satis was the main deity in the festival of the inundation.

¹³ Kaiser (1998) 23.

¹⁴ Kaiser (1998) 23.

¹⁵ Kaiser 23-25.

¹⁶ Arnold (1999) 189. The foundation of the temple was laid on February 4, 164 BCE (Hölbl, 2001, 260).

¹⁷ *OGIS* 168; Piejko (1992).

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