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Abstract

**Oases Tribute Scenes and Written References in the Theban Tombs of the
18th Dynasty**

In the first half of the 18th Dynasty representations of foreigners bringing tribute to the ancient Egyptian state under the supervision of the high officials of the pharaoh became a trend in the Theban noble tombs. These depictions and/or associated written references indicate the presentation of tribute as means of paying respect by foreign lands such as Nubia, the Levant, the Aegean, Wat-hor, Punt as well as the Oases of the Egyptian Western Desert to the Egyptian supreme power. However, these scenes displayed foreigners not as they appeared in reality, but as they should have appeared to conform to the local ideology. The images of foreigners had to appear within the constraints of Egyptian order: they were not chaotic or potentially harmful to the deceased owners of the tombs, but rather subservient. The tribute bringing foreigners seem to have submitted themselves to the humble servitude of the Egyptian state for they were repeatedly shown as kindly bowing and yielding to the high-ranking officials of the actually ruling pharaohs and providing them with their luxury, rare, exotic and specialized products. Coincidentally with all this, each scene on the walls of the tombs was also the self-representation of the Egyptian owners themselves, of their impact on society and unmatched international power around the Egyptian state.

The tribute bringers from the Western Oases appear in these scenes less often compared to the northern and southern neighbours of ancient Egypt. However, the submissive portrayal of the oases dwellers as tribute bringers confirms the certain existence of commercial exchange between the Nile Valley and the oases. The analysis of pictorial and written reference sources from the Theban noble tombs would make it possible for us to better understand not only the type of economy that existed in the Western Oases in the 18th Dynasty of the New Kingdom, but also the nature of their commercial exchanges and the structure of their dependence on the Nile Valley administration. Therefore, in my presentation I intend to go shortly through the visual and written sources referring to oases tribute in the Theban noble tombs in order to be able to outline in more detail the nature of connection and interaction between the Western Desert Oases at the westernmost end of the Egyptian frontier and the Nile Valley central power.