



Haifa Center for Mediterranean History  
מרכז חיפה לחקר ההיסטוריה של הים התיכון  
مركز حيفا لدراسات تاريخ البحر الأبيض



Maritime Civilizations  
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# 'Wonderful Things', First Encounters of Cypriots with Egyptian Monuments

Dr. Beatrice Pestarino

The Haifa Center for Mediterranean History (HCMH)



This paper focuses on Cypriot graffiti in Egypt, from Abydos, Karnak and Gizeh, written in different languages – Cypriot-syllabic and alphabetic Greek, Eteocypriot and Phoenician – on Egyptian monuments such as the Temple of Seti I, Akhoris' chapel and Cheops' pyramid (Egetmeyer 2010; Lidzbarski 1915). These graffiti are of two typologies: 'touristic' graffiti, written by visitors whose presence was occasional, and graffiti written by mercenaries who probably belonged to a permanent community settled in Egypt during the years of conflict (Vittmann 2003). They are analysed through a cognitive approach (Taylor, Pooley, Carragher 2016) which allows us to better understand how these individuals experienced writing graffiti,

Why they consistently wrote – and felt the necessity of writing – their name, genealogy, nickname and provenance on monuments, to which social stratum they belonged and why they chose specific languages and writing systems. The analysis also provides information on socio-linguistic aspects of Cypriot communities such as the ability to write in more than one language and the existence of Cypriot mixed Greek-Phoenician families (Steele 2018). This research will show how the sea and maritime connectivity allowed first cultural interactions amongst populations and had a remarkable impact on individuals' experiences. The Mediterranean Sea and the development of seafaring routes offered new paths to cross significant distances and increase interactions between geographically and culturally distinct societies, as in the case of the Cypriots and the Egyptians. Seafaring journeys, which happened in complete isolation, where the only visible element was the surrounding sea, contributed to increase the amazement caused by the visual impact of distinctive cultural elements of other societies, such as the Cypriots' first sight of the pyramids.

Email: [hcmh@univ.haifa.ac.il](mailto:hcmh@univ.haifa.ac.il) | Website: <http://hcmh.haifa.ac.il>