

TRAVEL

السفريات (الترحال)

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السفريات (الترحال)

Heidi Köpp-Junk

Reisen
Voyager

Travel was a crucial element of ancient Egyptian culture. An extensive traffic system by land and by water already existed as early as the Old Kingdom, including various means of transport that did not fundamentally change right through to the New Kingdom. Traveling activity attested for various professions demonstrates that Egyptian society exercised a high degree of mobility. In the majority of cases, a journey was undertaken within the scope of the traveler's work and on behalf of the pharaoh. Travel had a significant impact on the Egyptian world-view as well as on the development of the identity of Egyptian society as an entity .

السفريات هي عنصر هام في الحضارة المصرية القديمة، حيث وجد نظام مواصلات بري وبحري علي نطاق واسع منذ بدايات الدولة القديمة ، متضمناً وسائل متنوعة للنقل لم تتغير بشكل أساسي حتى عصر الدولة الحديثة. كان نشاط الترحال جزء من العديد من الوظائف ، مما يدل على أن المصريين القدماء كانوا يمارسوا درجة عالية من الترحال .و كان السفر في أغلب الحالات جزء من وظائف الأفراد نيابةً عن الفرعون. لذلك كان للسفر تأثير كبير على نظرة المصريين للعالم وأيضاً على تطور هوية المجتمع المصري.

The concept of travel in ancient Egypt differed greatly from our modern understanding of the term, which is largely associated with tourism. Today, people frequently travel for touristic reasons—namely, their need for rest and relaxation and their curiosity regarding foreign countries and peoples. However, this is a phenomenon that has developed only within the last 130 years (Bausinger 1991: 343 - 344). Up to the European Middle Ages and early modern era, traveling mostly took place for economic reasons rather than for pleasure. The same applies to ancient Egypt. From Pharaonic times there is little evidence of journeys for pleasure, or what we would interpret as “touristic” travel today (Köpp 2006: 309). Due to this fact, travel in ancient Egypt must be defined in a broader sense: it is the movement of a person from A to B, where B lies outside his usual radius of action. Other determining factors are absence from home and staying in other surroundings. Furthermore, the traveler's intention to return to his

point of departure is important, for this distinguishes travel from emigration, where no return is intended (Köpp 2006: 1 - 2; see also Baines 2007: 5 - 6).

Sources

Archaeological evidence, in addition to non-fictional and fictional texts, demonstrates how ancient Egyptians traveled. Depictions of Egyptian travelers are rare in Pharaonic Egypt. Occasionally Egyptian means of locomotion and transport appear in wall paintings, and reliefs in tombs and temples. Some sledges, chariots, and wagons, as well as one carrying chair, have been recovered archaeologically (Köpp 2006: 131 - 132; 141 n. 938; 154 - 155; 201).

Non-fiction sources referring to travels and travelers include biographies, expedition texts, official documents, and visitors' graffiti. But travel is not the core motif in these texts; it is mentioned only in passing. Therefore the information on travel

is rather fragmentary. Typically an inscription will mention only a journey's starting point or destination, very seldom both. Harkhuf's explicit reference to his travel routes to the land of Yam—namely, the Oasis Road and the Elephantine Road (Sethe: *Urk. I*: 124, 17-125, 11)—is an exception. The means of transport or locomotion used on a voyage were scarcely mentioned. A rare exception occurs in the biography of Weni, where reference is made to the ships in which Weni traveled (Sethe: *Urk. I*: 99, 15; 107, 7-9). The motif of travel appears often in Egyptian literature, for example in *The Shipwrecked Sailor*, *Sinube*, *The Eloquent Peasant*, *The Letter of Wermai*, and *Wenamun* (Loprieno 2003; Galán 2005; and particularly Moers 1999: 43-61; Moers 2001: 167 - 283).

The Ancient Egyptian Traveler

A high degree of mobility is attested in ancient Egypt from the earliest times (Köpp 2008a). Expeditions are already attested in the Predynastic Period (Eichler 1993: 269). Visitors' inscriptions from Dynasty 0 were found at the Gebel Tjauti (Darnell and Darnell 1997: 25). There is further evidence dating to King Hor Aha and Khasekhemwy in Nubia, and for Djer at Gebel Sheikh Suleiman (Zibelius-Chen 1988: 144 - 145; Endesfelder 1991: 17 - 18). Expeditions are attested up to the 30th Dynasty (Blumenthal 1977: 87). Travelers, however, were not only members of expeditions: they came from very different professions ranging across the whole of Egyptian society. Besides those professionals requiring a high degree of mobility, such as merchants, messengers, and members of the army, there is documentary evidence of many others, such as traveling physicians, architects, scribes, craftsmen, workers, and priests, who were frequently but not exclusively on the move as members of expeditions.

Two important categories of travelers were members of expeditions and members of the army, both consisting of a variety of occupational categories. Expeditions to Sinai could include “twenty-five different types of government officials, eleven types of specialized local mining officials, eight types of artisans and nine types of laborers” (Shaw 1986: 200). The same range is evidenced at the Wadi el-Hudi and the Wadi Hammamat in the Middle Kingdom (Shaw 1986: 200). The officials

referred to in the expedition texts are not only high-ranking but from lower ranks as well (Seyfried 1981: 4). Hunters, fowlers, brewers, sandal makers, bakers, scribes, millers, servants (Seyfried 1981: 248 - 252; Kemp 2007: 181), physicians, priests (Engelmann and Hallof 1995: 113, 131), and mayors (HAtj-a) (Seyfried 1981: 249) are mentioned in the texts. In the New Kingdom, professions connected with horses and chariots, such as charioteers, were attested (Hikade 2001: 43).

Expeditions differed in size and in the profession of their members, depending on the type of material they were sent out to retrieve, or on the goods they were going to trade. For example, quarrying expeditions for precious stones and gems required a greater number of specialists, whereas expeditions for large, heavy blocks required a majority of lessor-skilled workers for the quarrying, and especially the transport, of the stones (Verner 1991: 65 - 66). In the Old Kingdom, the number of expedition members lies between 80 und 20,000 (Eichler 1993: 125, 155, 325). Senusret I sent to the Wadi Hammamat an expedition that included “18,660 skilled and unskilled workers” (Kemp 2007: 181). A mission under the reign of Ramesses III counted 3,000 members, including 2,000 common workers and 500 masons (Hikade 2001: 49). An expedition under Ramesses IV consisted of 408 members in total (Hikade 2001: 38), among them 50 stone-carriers and 200 transport-carriers (Steinmann 1984: 31). Already from these few pieces of evidence it becomes clear that expedition members came from various professions with a sizable number of common workers among them.

A calculation of the figures given in the expedition texts reveals that there is evidence for approximately 23,400 members of expeditions in the Old Kingdom, nearly 40,000 in the Middle Kingdom, and 13,622 in the New Kingdom (Köpp 2006: 274, 277, 278, 313). The explanation as to why the number of expedition members in the New Kingdom is lower in comparison with that of the Old and Middle Kingdoms lies in the fact that there are fewer expedition-related inscriptions from the New Kingdom that survive (Zibelius-Chen 1988: 155) and they are less detailed than those from the Middle Kingdom (Eichler 1993: 273). It is assumed nevertheless that the number of travelers increased with the expansion of the Egyptian empire in the

New Kingdom, since the expansion promoted a higher degree of mobility within several professions, such as the military and the administration (Köpp 2006: 313 - 314).

Not every expedition that took place is documented; thus the total number of travelers who were on the move as members of expeditions is higher than the documented figures we possess. Furthermore, since the expedition texts frequently mention only the higher ranking members, while the lower grades are often not mentioned (Eichler 1993: 158 - 159, 181), the total figures may conceivably have been much higher.

The members of the army consisted of various professions—from scribes to generals and soldiers of the lower ranks—all of whom could exhibit mobility: they could be assigned to war campaigns, or stationed far from home, sent on expeditions (Seyfried 1981: 248 - 252; Kemp 2007: 181), or sent to perform *corvée* (i.e., compulsory) labor (Helck 1975: 371). Numerical data for the Egyptian army are rare and their interpretation is controversial (Spalinger 2005: 155 - 156, 158 n. 16, 229). Nevertheless, the biggest contingent of an army consisted of soldiers of the lower ranks, constituting the infantry for the most part.

Apart from members of expeditions and of the army, other travelers with a variety of occupations are mentioned in the texts. Egyptian physicians not only took part in expeditions, but they were sent out by the pharaoh on building projects (Engelmann and Hallof 1995: 105, 126, 128) and to foreign royal courts, due to the considerable repute they enjoyed (Edel 1976: 31, 41, 45 - 47, 82 - 84, 87 - 89, 104 - 106).

Architects were on the move for professional reasons and on behalf of the pharaoh to supervise official building projects. One such architect was Nekhebu of the 6th Dynasty (Sethe: *Urk. I*: 215 - 221). He was sent out several times by Pepy I to Upper and Lower Egypt to oversee the digging of a canal in Qus and the royal building projects in Heliopolis, where he stayed for six years. During this time, he made a few official trips to the residence in Memphis.

The mobility of scribes arose from the fact that, being part of the bureaucracy, they were transferred by official order to new places of employment as

required. This could be sent within Egypt but abroad as well. Such a widely traveled scribe was Nebnetjeru, whose graffiti is found between Kalabsha and Dendur, near Tonkalah, and possibly even at Toshka (Černý 1947: 57).

Craftsmen were also on the move. There is evidence of craftsmen in the service of private individuals and of pharaoh (Drenkhahn 1976: 134 - 157). They were not necessarily tied to a particular workshop but were sent out on expeditions and large-scale royal building projects (Verner 1991: 77). Even higher-ranking craftsmen with titles such as *ḥmw wr*, *jmj-r3 k3t*, and *jmj-r3 nbjw n pr R^c* are among those whose project-related work orders caused them to travel (e.g., Raue 1999: 72, n. 2, 152 - 153, 157, 196 - 198, 234).

Priests traveled not only as members of expeditions but also in order to fulfil special duties for temples or to organize religious festivities (e.g., Raue 1999: 73, 74, 172 - 173, 180, 202 - 205, 250 - 251), as did Ikhernofret at Abydos in the 12th Dynasty (Lichtheim 1973: 123).

A high official's occupational move to a different location is frequently mentioned (see, for example, Brunner-Traut et al. 1984: no. 64). Mayors (Sethe: *Urk. VII*: 14 - 18), viziers (Niwinski 1992: 256), as well as the pharaoh traveled on official government business—e.g., inspections, and diplomatic or military missions. Royal journeys are shown to have taken place beginning in Predynastic times from several sources including annals (Endesfelder 1991: 20). Furthermore, the so-called *šmsw Ḥrw*, the “following of Horus,” took place every two years and led the king through the whole land (von Beckerath 1956: 6 - 7; Baines 2007: 11). In the New Kingdom, Pharaoh traveled yearly for religious reasons to Thebes to celebrate the Opet Festival (Baines 2004: 43). Royal travels are further attested in the annals of Thutmose III reporting his war campaigns (Sethe: *Urk. IV*: 645 - 734) or the inscriptions at the temple of Kanais recording a visit by Sety I to the Eastern Desert (Kitchen 1975: 65 - 70).

Thus the textual evidence, as demonstrated in these few examples, reveals significantly that travelers came from very different professions from the whole of Egyptian society (Köpp 2006: 284, 314). A sizable amount of them represented the

lower levels of the population, such as the common workers recruited for building the pyramids and other large-scale state building projects, as well as low-ranking soldiers or unskilled laborers, illustrating that a high degree of mobility apparently existed not just for the elite. Moreover, it is evident that the great majority of the travelers were on the move not only in connection with their profession, but on official duty through the order of the pharaoh (Köpp 2006: 284, 314 - 315).

Most travelers were men; women are only seldom attested. Although there is little explicit evidence for women traveling, frequently their mobility can be deduced, if indirectly (see Köpp 2006: 288 - 289, 291 - 295, 315 - 316). Egyptian marriage customs normally required that women move to their husband's house (Allam 1975: 1167), indicating a degree of mobility. Women were also included in *corvée* labor, for example at a temple of Seneferu (Posener-Kriéger 1975: 212). Rare textual and pictorial evidence for women using chariots and carrying chairs demonstrates that they used the same means of transport as men (Köpp 2008b: 34 - 44).

Motivations for Traveling

Throughout history there have been a variety of practical, psychological, and sociological motivations for undertaking a journey (see Köpp 2006: 306 - 307), the causal factor of utmost importance being the search for food and attainment of provisions. A secondary reason was to expand territory for settlement due to demographic pressure or military motivations. Trade and aspirations of profit-making were also highly important, coupled with the desire for new raw materials, exotic products, and luxury goods. Curiosity and the thirst for adventure were other motives to start a journey, as well as health reasons and the desire to educate oneself and broaden one's horizon by visiting foreign lands and peoples. Other travels had a religious impetus, such as pilgrimages, or were of a social nature, such as marriage.

Some of these motivations are attested for ancient Egypt, others not. According to textual sources the search for food was never a primary driving factor of Egyptian mobility, although there is evidence of foreign travelers, such as Nubians, who came to Elephantine in search of employment and subsequently reported that "the desert is dying of

hunger" (Semna Dispatch No. 5; Smither 1945: 9). Military motivations are well documented through various war campaigns, like those described in the Annals of Thutmose III (Sethe: *Urk. IV*: 645 - 763). Egyptian travels to Punt or Byblos were motivated by reasons of economics and prestige. The exchange of luxury goods and objects of prestige was already important in the Nagada I Period (Hartung 1998: 37 - 50). The travels of Harkhuf were prompted by a mixture of economic and military reasons (Eichler 1993: 150). Exploratory voyages equivalent to those of Christopher Columbus, or to those of the eighteenth and nineteenth century CE made in search of the source of the Nile, are not known from ancient Egypt. Rather, the textual evidence shows that the ancient Egyptian traveler never journeyed at random but always had a fixed destination. Curiosity as a motive is attested, such as at the Temple of Philae, where visitors' inscriptions demonstrate an interest in ancient buildings (Wildung 1975: 766). The desire for education as a stimulus for starting a journey is very rare. It is shown, for example, by New Kingdom school excursions to temples and other monuments, as attested from visitors' graffiti (Helck 1987: 20; Fischer-Elfert 2003: 131). Travel for religious purposes is attested from the earliest times (Baines 2004: 35). Pilgrimages in the truest sense of the word are known only from the New Kingdom (see for example Davies and Friedman 1999: 187; Sadek 1987: 197, n. 3, 4; Helck 1958a: *Urk. IV*: 1832 - 1833), and possibly from the Middle Kingdom (Lichtheim 1988: 101). Because a pilgrimage is defined as a voyage motivated exclusively by religious reasons and expanding the traveler's usual sphere of action (Beinlich 1986: 1145), the *en passant* inscriptions of expedition members at religious sites do not attest to pilgrimages *per se*, since religious reasons did not constitute the only impetus for their journey (Yoyotte 1960: 65, n. 10 - 11). Examples of involuntary travel (exile or flight) are known as well (Köpp 2006: 302 - 303).

The most frequent reason to start a journey, according to the texts, was not of a personal nature, but rather occupational and on behalf of the king (Köpp 2006: 284 - 285; 309). Constituting an exception were traders, who had high occupational mobility and traveled because of their own work-related interests, without having been explicitly sent out by the king (Köpp 2006: 255 - 258).

Evidence for private journeys is rare. One of the few known pieces of evidence for private travelers (other than those attested in Egyptian literature, for which see *Menna's Lament* or *Letter to a Wayward Son*: Guglielmi 1983: 147 - 166) is in a tomb biography of Sabni, the 6th-Dynasty governor of the territory of Aswan (Köpp 2006: 287 - 288). Upon being informed of his father's death, Sabni embarked on a journey to fetch the corpse (Sethe: *Urk. I*: 135, 17-136, 3). The text does not mention an explicit royal order that Sabni undertake the journey. During his voyage, Sabni sends out a courier with a message (Sethe: *Urk. I*: 137, 8). Although the recipient of the note is not mentioned, it is to be assumed that it was addressed to the royal residence, for a high-ranking official like Sabni was certainly not allowed to leave his position and travel abroad without official permission (Baines 2004: 28; Köpp 2006: 287). It appears, therefore, that his journey was undertaken for private reasons (the death of his father), but that he needed official dispensation to leave. Another private traveler was perhaps Heqanakht of the 11th Dynasty, who owned land near Lisht but sent letters to his family in Thebes, where he was working (Allen 2002); it is not known, however, whether he was traveling for governmental purposes or for private reasons (Köpp 2006: 288).

The fact that private travels are seldom attested in textual material does not imply that they did not take place (we have seen above that they did), but only that they have not been recorded. For example, private travel surely did occur for family reasons, including marriage. Travels for private reasons are therefore indirectly proven by the marriages themselves and the resulting family visits. Moreover, visits to the tombs of deceased relatives are widely attested. The factual extent of private mobility, highlighted by these traces of evidence, can only be surmised at best, since much concrete proof for its range and diversity is lacking.

Social and Ideological Implications of Travel

Travel and mobility had fundamental implications for Egyptian society, for they played an essential role in the exchange of ideas and innovations, and in the self-definition of a culture. Only when perceiving and accepting the existence of other cultures did Egyptians begin to see themselves as belonging to one entity (Bausinger 1991: 350; Köpp 2006: 1), thus

leading to the development of Egyptian identity. Moreover, in the interaction with the foreign, the traveler left his everyday radius of action and expanded his knowledge and broadened his horizons. This happened not only through travel in foreign lands but even on Egyptian terrain that was unfamiliar. The *Tale of Sinuhe* makes reference to this feeling of foreignness by evoking the experience of an Egyptian within Egypt: "It was like the nature of a dream, like a Delta man seeing himself in Elephantine, a man of the marshy lagoons in southern Egypt (Sinuhe B 225; translated by Parkinson 1997: 38).

Through comparison with medieval Europe one could assume that it was predominantly the Egyptian nobility and clergy who traveled, and therefore the elite and higher social levels. In fact, in medieval society, the mobility of craftsmen, traders, and students surpassed that of the nobility and clergy (Elkar 1991: 57). An analogous situation applies to ancient Egypt, for in addition to the travels of the elite, the mobility of professions of the middle and lower class is proven in the texts. A group of travelers not to be ignored consisted of lower-ranking soldiers and workers, i.e., under-privileged people, because they played a major role in expeditions and armies. Furthermore, the mobilizing effect of the so-called *corvée* labor should not be underestimated (Köpp 2006: 267 - 271). Up to two percent of the population was supposedly involved in building the pyramids (Endesfelder 1991: 45), and was therefore on the move. Mobility was therefore obviously independent of social or financial background and not a status symbol.

No texts have been handed down that were composed directly by travelers from the lower social strata; rather, we possess only indirect references to them. Biographies of elite members of society, however, often include portrayals of travel. Although traveling and mobility were *de facto* not indicators of status, Baines stresses that travel was regarded as prestigious within the elite and was therefore emphasized in their biographies (Baines 2004: 19 - 28).

The means of transportation depended on the social status of the traveler (Köpp 2006: 243, 397). The lower classes traveled by foot or, at best, by donkey. Well-to-do people, probably including

dignitaries, traveled mounted on donkeys in the Old and Middle Kingdoms (Köpp 2006: 186, 193, 397; Stadelmann 2006: 301), the donkeys also serving to transport the travelers' belongings. The elite traveled in the most prestigious ways—namely, by carrying chairs transported by servants or donkeys in the Old and Middle Kingdoms, and by chariots in the New Kingdom. Luggage was borne by donkeys or by carriers with the help of poles and yokes.

The distances traveled varied considerably. There is evidence of short trips as well as journeys covering almost 1,400 km, as was attested for the priest Horemkhauf, who traveled from Hierakonpolis to *Jtj-t3wj*, near Lisht, and back (Lichtheim 1973: 129 – 130; of course some people never traveled, their range of movement encompassing only their own village and its vicinity). Some travelers moved perhaps as far as 14,000 km, such as Harkhuf, if we surmise that the one-way distance to Yam is 1,725 km (Edel 1955: 66, note 2). In Harkhuf's biography three journeys to Yam are explicitly mentioned, and there is indirect evidence of a fourth in a letter from Pepy II (see Goedicke 1981). The location of Yam is nevertheless controversial (see O'Connor 1986: 27 - 50; O'Connor and Quirke 2003: 10; Obsomer 2007: 39 - 52).

On the Way: Orientation

In ancient Egypt, the traveler could find his way in unknown terrain with the help of a local guide, or with maps or geographical lists, or even route markers. Egypt's oldest surviving map is on a Ramesside papyrus, now in the Museum of Turin (Papyrus Turin 1869, 1879, 1869). Depicting a gold mine area with mountains and tracks, it bears geographical and even geological information. The landscape depicted in the map is the Wadi Hammamat, though the concrete relationship to the site is debated (Harrell and Brown 1992: 81 - 105 with further reading).

Several geographical lists are known from ancient Egypt. Those geographical lists are not merely a listing of place names in varying order—they also give the names of lands, cities, and villages in the exact geographical sequence in which the traveler passes through them. One geographical list is inscribed on a statue from the mortuary temple of Amenhotep III, describing the travel route from

Mykene, via Pylos and Kythera, to Crete (Edel 1966: XIV, 33 - 60, listing E_N). Papyrus Anastasi I gives not only geographical lists but also some detailed information, important to the traveler, concerning Palestine and Syria, including background on the surroundings, and even a description of possible threats, like robbery (Papyrus Anastasi I 18,3ff.; 20,1 - 20,6).

For orientation in nearer surroundings, route markers were used along the way, such as stone piles called *alamat*, solitary stone blocks, or stelae. Roads and paths served as guidelines as well (Köpp 2006: 65 - 67; 2009b: 73; for roads and paths in detail see Köpp 2006: 21 - 82; 2009 a and b).

On the Way: Means of Transport and Locomotion

For journeys on water, vessels were used as early as the fifth millennium BCE (Vinson 1994: 11). They were an essential element of the Egyptian traffic system. A wide variety of ships and boats was used for transporting freight and passengers on inland waterways and at sea. For overland transport, pack animals were used as well as vehicles. The heaviness of the load influenced the means of transportation chosen. Lighter objects, such as luggage or supplies, were carried by the traveler himself or by servants, occasionally with the help of poles, such as are mentioned in the text of an expedition to Wadi Hammamat (Couyat and Montet 1912: no. 114), and perhaps of yokes, as depicted in a hunting scene in Beni Hassan (Newberry 1893, pl. 13, Köpp 2006: 83, 93 - 177). Slightly heavier weight was transported by animals. The donkey was the typical pack animal of ancient Egypt, whereas the ox was the typical draft animal. Overland transport of heavier loads took place with vehicles such as sledges, carts, and wagons. Roughly half a dozen two-wheeled carts and nearly 30 types of four- to eight-wheeled wagons, equipped with discs or spokes, are known from ancient Egypt (fig. 1; Köpp 2006: 148 - 177). They were only used for the transfer of freight, and not for passengers. Carts and wagons transported the loads that were too heavy for donkeys and oxen, whereas sledges were used for even larger weights, thus avoiding the risk of broken axles (Köpp 2006: 120 - 140). This explains why sledges were not replaced by carts and wagons: their different load capacities complemented one another (Köpp 2006: 141, 176).

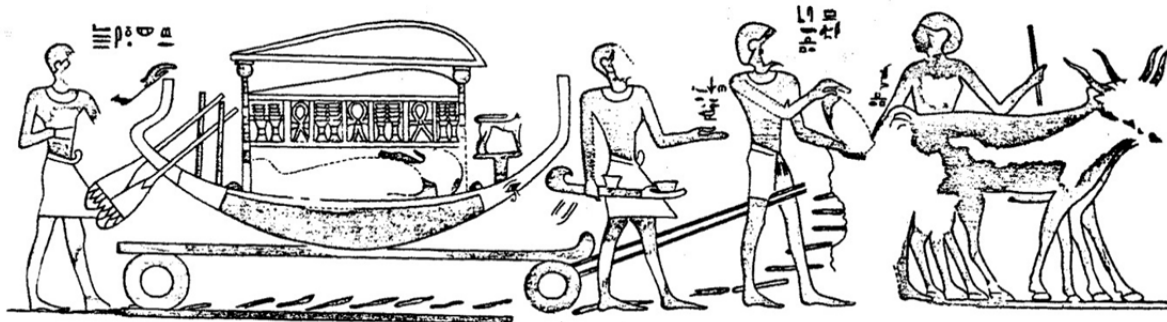


Figure 1. The oldest known wagon from ancient Egypt, equipped with four disc wheels. Tomb of Sobeknakht, Second Intermediate Period, Elkab.

As means of overland travel, mount animals, sedan chairs, or chariots are known (Köpp 2006: 177 - 244)—and of course walking. For donkey riding, indirect evidence exists from the Old Kingdom in the form of representations of oval pillow-shaped saddles depicted in the tombs of Kahief (Junker 1943: fig. 45), Neferiretenef (Van de Walle 1978: 12), and Methethi (Harpur 1987: fig. 212). These saddles were similar to the saddle of the Queen of Punt depicted in a New Kingdom scene in the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri. Similarly, representations of donkey riding are known from the Middle Kingdom (Gardiner et al 1952 - 1955: pls. 37, 39, 44, 85; Valbelle and Bonnet 1996: fig. 15; Houlihan 1996: 31) and New Kingdom (e.g., Houlihan 2002: 41, fig. 4). The earliest pictorial evidence of a ridden horse dates to the reign of Thutmose III. Horse riding is proven in connection with scouts, couriers, and soldiers (Schulman 1957: 263 - 271) and is a mode of locomotion that had an obvious emphasis on speed.

The sedan chair was an elite means of transport (Köpp 2006: 195 - 216). Primarily men appear as occupants; there are only a few depictions of, and texts referring to, women in carrying chairs (Köpp 2008b: 34 - 44). Very occasionally other types of chair, such as the donkey litter, are depicted (fig. 2; Moussa and Altenmüller 1977: pls. 42, 43), but these are only attested in the 5th Dynasty. Significantly, the carrying chairs of the New Kingdom were depicted only in a religious context; it therefore appears that a change in the chair's function took place from a non-religious to a religious use (Köpp 2006: 212).



Figure 2. Khuiwer in his donkey litter—the only suitable mode of traveling for the elite in the Old and Middle Kingdoms, and most likely for high dignitaries on expeditions as well. Tomb of Khuiwer, 5th Dynasty, Giza.

Palanquins were used for short journeys and presumably for long distances as well, being the only suitable means of highly esteemed passenger transportation in the Old and Middle Kingdom (Köpp 2006: 234, 396). From their first appearance, the litter was a status symbol, used by the king and royal family. From the 3rd Dynasty, the group of

users expanded to include high officials (Rössler-Köhler 1984: 334). In the New Kingdom, again the occupants were solely the pharaoh and his family. At this point the chariot replaced the carrying chair and the elite used it as a prestigious means of locomotion (Köpp 2006: 209 - 212, 234, 396).

The earliest written evidence for chariots dates to the 17th Dynasty (Habachi 1972: 36). It was used for warfare, hunting, sports, and also for travel (Schulman 1980: 146, 148). Its application in warfare is well attested and often discussed (e.g., Schulman 1980: 105 - 153). A number of hunting scenes displaying pharaohs on chariots are known (see for example Saleh and Sourouzian 1986: No. 186); some are attested for private persons as well (Hofmann

1989: 281). A rare instance of its sportive role is shown in a representation of Amenhotep II at Karnak (Decker and Herb 1994: pl. 70, E 4 - 5). Chariot races such as those known from ancient Rome are not attested in Pharaonic Egypt.

The chariot was the supreme mode of locomotion for the elite for private and public purposes (fig. 3) and an important status symbol in the New Kingdom (Decker 1984: 875, n. 16). It was used for visits and inspections by pharaohs, such as Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV, and Akhenaten, as well as high officials (Schulman 1980: 145; Hofmann 1989: 262, 284 - 287; Köpp 2006: 235 - 238). Women are also depicted in chariots (see Köpp 2008b: 34 - 44; Köpp 2010: 32 - 33).

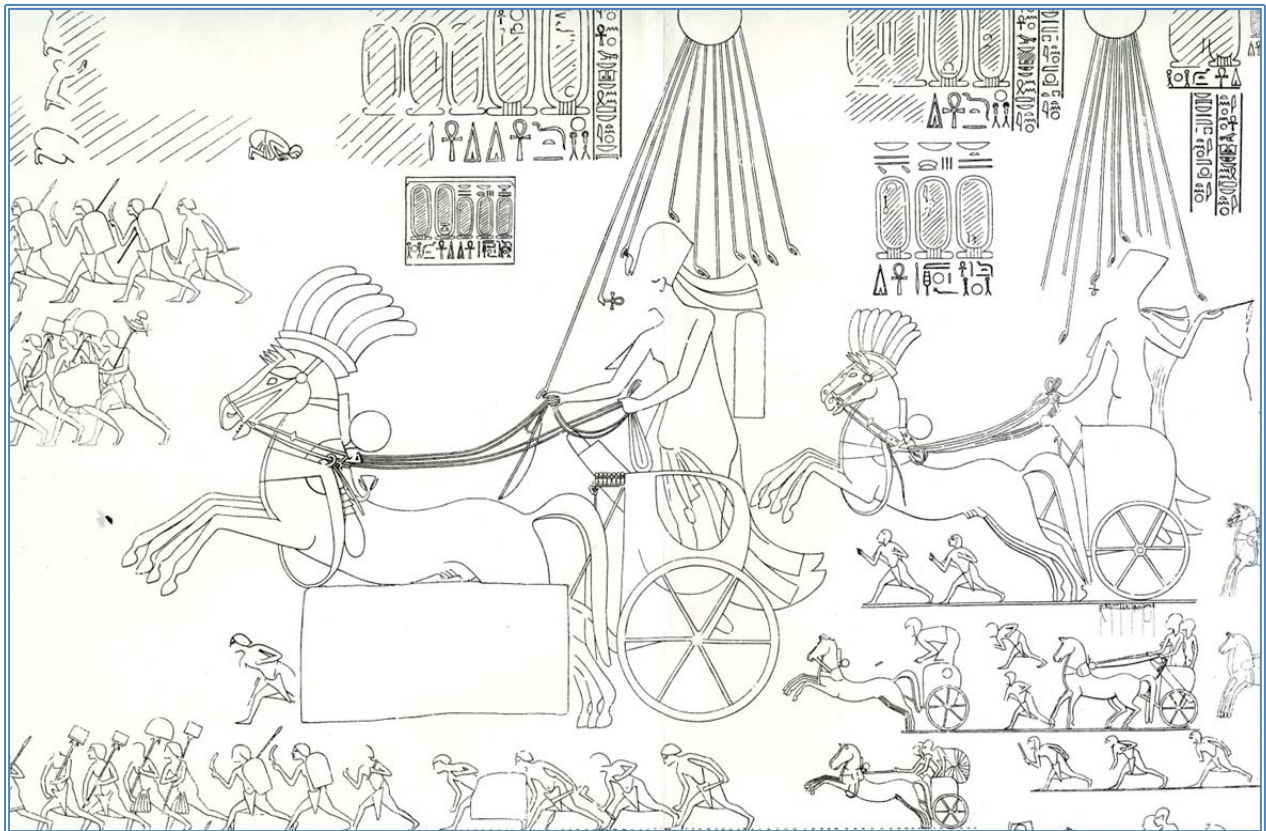


Figure 3. The chariot as a prestigious mode of locomotion: Akhenaten and Nefertiti riding in their chariots, accompanied by high officials and princesses, who ride in chariots as well. Tomb of Panehesi, 18th Dynasty, Amarna.

The suitability of the chariot for long-distance travel was limited since its fragile spoked wheels needed even and compact soil (Köpp 2006: 78 - 79, 217, 236 - 237); it was not capable of being driven cross-country on uneven, sandy, or rocky ground, especially at high speeds. The oldest chariot found in Egypt, now in the Museum of Florence, has a total weight of only 24 kg, and the tread of its wheels is only 2 cm wide (fig. 4; Horn 1995: 50; Decker 1986: 42). With some accommodations, chariots were nevertheless brought on long-distance journeys: when the ground was prepared in advance or geologically solid enough, they could be used, even in the desert. According to a text from the reign of Ramesses IV, an expedition to the Wadi Hammamat consisted of 8,361 members, including one royal chariot-driver, 20 stable masters, 50 charioteers (Hikade 2001: 40 - 43, 207 - 208) and, according to Schulman, the same number of chariots belonging to them (Schulman 1963: 83). Papyrus Anastasi describes the crossing of a mountain pass leading from the coastal plain to Megiddo, with chariots being taken along (Papyrus Anastasi I 23, 1-24, 6; Fischer-Elfert 1986: 196 - 203). Over uneven, rough, or hilly terrain, a chariot could be carried on the shoulders of a single man (Hofmann 1989: 121, figs. 67, 99; Fischer-Elfert 1986: 160); due to its light weight it did not need to be dismantled.



Figure 4. Replica of an Egyptian chariot, based on the chariot in the Museo Egizio de Firenze (no. 2678) and those from the tomb of Tutankhamen.

The chariot was the fastest, but also the most expensive, means of travel. Apart from the chariot itself, horses had to be bought and maintained, and a staff needed to be employed for the maintenance and care of both (Köpp 2006: 217). Therefore, at the beginning of the 18th Dynasty, only the king and a few high officials could afford them (Hofmann 1989: 33). In contrast, about 2,000 chariots have been estimated for the Egyptian army of the 19th Dynasty (Langenbach 2009: 347). This gives an indication of the increasing use of the chariot. How many additional chariots were privately owned is uncertain (Köpp 2006: 238).

On the Way: Accommodation

In the desert, the traveler found primitive accommodations in the form of semicircular wind huts built with irregular stones. Two of these camps were found near the road from Gebel el-Asr to Tushka (Shaw 2006: 258, fig. 6). Other options were to sleep outdoors or in tents. Even pharaohs lodged in tents on their military campaigns and expeditions, as did Thutmose III during his Megiddo campaign (Sethe: Urk. IV: 655, 12, 15; 656, 6, 13), Ramesses II during the battle of Kadesh (Kitchen 1979: 102), and also Pijé (Schäfer: Urk. III: 40, 11-15). Akhenaton slept in a tent when he first visited Amarna (Helck 1958b: Urk. IV: 1982, 11-12).

In the Hetepheres deposit, as well as in the tomb of Tutankhamen, royal travel equipment was found. The latter had a light folding bed (fig. 5; Carter and Mace 1923: pl. 31). Hetepheres's complete traveling ensemble was found in Giza, including a tent, traveling bed, chair, and even the palanquin (Reisner and Smith 1955: pl. 5b, 26e, 27a).

Special stations for the lodging of the king's messengers are known from the New Kingdom at the latest (Papyrus Chester Beatty I, Ib). Diodorus Siculus (first century BCE) mentioned one hundred horse relay stations between Memphis and Thebes (Diodorus Siculus I: 45, 7; Darnell 2002: 135). At these stations the messengers found food and accommodations and exchanged their tired horses for refreshed ones, which improved the traveling speed. In contrast, the elite, the royal retinue, and those who journeyed on official duty were supplied by state-owned institutions, such as temples, chapels, and special storage facilities (Sethe: *Urk. I:*

131, 4-7; 214, 11-17). The concept of hospitality existed in ancient Egypt in much the same manner that it appeared in the European Middle Ages: the traveler was supplied with food and water and accommodated by the local residents when passing through foreign but inhabited terrain (Sinuhe B 25 - 28, 94 - 98; Papyrus Anastasi I 25, 7).



Figure 5. Traveling bed of Tutankhamen, folded to one third of its size by hinges. Tomb of Tutankhamen, 18th Dynasty, Valley of the Kings, Luxor, Museum of Egyptian Antiquities, Cairo (JE 62018).

Travelers took clothing, sandals, sticks, and weapons with them (*Truth and Falsehood*, Papyrus British Museum 10682, 7, 1-2; *The Two Brothers*, Papyrus D'Orbiney 12, 10 - 13, 2), as well as food and water for themselves and their pack or riding animals. If the journey was of any great length, the traveler had to consequently depend on wells, cisterns, or water deposits along the way. There is archaeological evidence for chains of water supplies along desert tracks, such as the Old Kingdom water depots in the Libyan Desert on the Abu Ballas Trail (Förster 2007: 1 - 36). The route the traveler chose was of course determined by the existence of such water depots.

On the Way: Obstacles and Imminent Dangers en Route

Traveling was dangerous. Natural obstacles such as cataracts, deserts, or mountains delayed or even prevented the traveler's return. He could lose his way or find a watering place dried out, or he could run out of supplies in the event of hindrances. Further dangers derived from extreme weather, such as violent storms and intense heat. Diseases threatened as a result of hunger, thirst, bad weather,

or overexertion. Papyrus Anastasi vividly illustrates how exhausting traveling could be in its description of a traveler, weary after crossing a mountain and the River Jordan (Papyrus Anastasi I 19, 9; Fischer-Elfert 1983: 128), arriving home to Egypt with his tired horses, only to be robbed and to find his food supplies gone (Papyrus Anastasi I 25, 6-26, 3; Fischer-Elfert 1986: 224).

The danger of being robbed while traveling was clearly very high. *The Admonitions of Ipuwer*, although a text of exaggerated literary form, shows that the occurrence of robbery was a known phenomenon. The text explicitly warns of plunderers along the road: "O, but the plunderer [rob]s everywhere" and "they sit in bushes until a night traveler comes to seize his load, and what he carried is taken; he is treated to blows of a stick, and is falsely slain" (*Admonitions* 2, 2; 5, 11-12; translated by Parkinson 1997: 171, 176).

Due to the imminent dangers on the way, the undertaking of a journey implied the possibility of not returning home (Köpp 2006: 340 - 347). The inscription of the second Hammamat stela of Ramesses IV mentions 900 dead on an expedition of 8,368 members (Couyat and Montet 1912: 38, nos. 12, 19)—that is, approximately ten percent of the total number of members. To the ancient Egyptian, it was very important not to die abroad or, even worse, be buried in a foreign land, for fear that an adequate afterlife would only be possible if he were buried in Egypt (Otto 1966: 103). This becomes clear from the tale of *The Shipwrecked Sailor* and of *Sinuhe*. In *The Shipwrecked Sailor*, the importance of dying in Egypt is explicitly mentioned: "Then, a ship shall come from the Residence with sailors that you (would) recognize. You shall leave with them to the Residence; you shall die in your city" (Papyrus Leningrad 1115, 120-123; translated by Galán 2005: 32). In *The Tale of Sinuhe* the protagonist states: "What could be more important than that my body be buried in the land where I was born?" (Sinuhe B 159-160; translated by Galán 2005: 68).

Travelers nevertheless died abroad. The inscriptions of the Old Kingdom expedition leaders Sabni (Sethe: *Urk. I*: 135, 17-140, 11) and Pepinakht (Sethe: *Urk. I*: 131, 15-135,7) state that both went on a journey to bring back the bodies of Egyptians who died far from home on expeditions. It was therefore not unusual, in this period at least, to bring deceased

members of the elite or high-ranking officials home to be buried in Egypt (Köpp 2006: 346).

On the Way: Traveling Speed

Information regarding the speed of overland travel in ancient Egypt (in detail see Köpp 2006: 347 - 363) is very seldom evidenced in the texts. Nevertheless, it was extremely important for the traveler for it enabled him to calculate the journey's duration to the next stop or lodging place.

Evidence for running is found on a stele of Taharqa of the 25th Dynasty (684 BCE). The text states that the route from Memphis to the Fayum, a distance of about 50 km, was covered by soldiers at a speed of 9.2 km/hour to 14.6 km/hour (Leitz 2001: 7-9). From the Megiddo campaign of Thutmose III, an average daily travel rate for large troops is attested to be 20 km (Faulkner 1942: 2) or even 24 km (Redford 2003: 202). The daily rate of marching by a *Medjai* soldier on patrol was 42 km per day (Darnell 2003: 83). These texts apply to soldiers, however, and not to ordinary travelers.

The speed of travel in ancient Egypt can be reconstructed by comparison with similar means of locomotion and transportation known from the Middle Ages, the modern era, and from experimental archaeology. For walking, one can assume an average speed of 4 - 6 km/hour, allowing for a distance of 25 - 40 km/day (Ohler 1988: 141). Similar speeds can therefore be extrapolated for sedan chairs carried by men. Edel suggested an average speed of about 15 km/day for Harkhuf's donkey-accompanied caravan, including breaks for resting and feeding (Edel 1960: 19). Stadelmann and Kuhlmann assume that the daily travel rate for donkeys was about 40 km/day (Stadelmann 2006: 301; Kuhlmann 1992: 201, no. 35).

Medieval four-wheeled freight wagons drawn by horses achieved 23 - 30 km/day (Denecke 1987: 215, 217)—that is, 2.5 - 3.75 km/hour, traveling 8 hours/day. A four-wheeled oxen-drawn wagon, equipped with disk wheels and weighing about 670 - 700 kg from the third millennium BCE, is assumed to have achieved about 3.2 km/hour (Piggott 1992: 17 - 18); in an 8-hour travel day, a daily travel rate of 25.6 km/day can be calculated. The speed of Egyptian wagons, and probably carts as well, can therefore be estimated at about 3 km/hour.

The speed of a horse is 4 - 7 km/hour at a walking pace and 45 - 52 km/hour at a full gallop (Junkelmann 1990: 46). An experiment conducted over a distance of 1000 meters with a replica of a chariot determined a speed of 38 km/hour (Spruytte 1977: 39). It was calculated that chariots 3 and 5 from the tomb of Tutankhamen could reach speeds of 40.1 - 87.4 km/hour before the wheel rims would break (Hofmann 1989: 334, who adds that in modern trotting races about 50 km/hour was reached). It is therefore realistic to suppose a maximum speed of about 40 km/hour for Egyptian chariots. With the introduction of the horse obviously a new dimension of speed became available to the traveler. Before that, the speed of donkeys and traveling by foot was more or less equally slow.

The speeds of river travel (i.e., traveling on the Nile) reached even greater extremes, varying considerably between 17 km/day (Fischer 1975: 34), 73 km/day (Herodotus II: 4 - 9), and 140 km/day (Fischer 1975: 34), depending on the type of vessel the traveler used, the wind direction, and the stream velocity (in detail see Köpp 2006: 357 - 360).

When determining travel speeds, it is necessary to consider that a combination of different modes of transport and locomotion were often used to reach a destination. The speed of a traveling group consisting of different means of transport and locomotion was determined by the slowest element of the mission. The traveling speed and the distance covered per day also depended on the terrain the traveler had to pass through, on climate and temperature, on the constitution of the traveler himself and his pack or riding animals, the weight they had to carry, and the resting periods they needed (Köpp 2006: 347 - 363).

Travel as a Motif in Egyptian Literature

A number of Egyptologists have worked on the motif of travel in Egyptian literature (e.g., Loprieno 2003; Galán 2005; and particularly Moers 1999, 2001). The travel motif represents the crossing of borders in a dual sense: as transgressing the border from fact to fiction and from the known into the unknown. Traveling to unfamiliar, far-off places, the protagonist undergoes a process of identity-questioning and finds himself in the end. The travel motif is sometimes used didactically to demonstrate

how a protagonist breaks free from society and tradition, but is “re-educated” by isolation and returns repentant to adapt to the norms of his social group (Köpp 2006: 246).

The Egyptian travel narratives exhibit the motif of the protagonist as a traveler leaving home. Starting a journey into unknown spheres, the traveler transgresses borders and must undergo life-threatening dangers and risks, forcing him to re-evaluate his own identity. The experience allows him to return to Egypt with a reaffirmation of being an Egyptian living according to the concept of *maat*. The outside journey is a metaphor for his journey inside himself. The unknown spheres in the travel narratives of the Middle and New Kingdoms were foreign lands, such as Asia Minor (Moers 2001: 282). In later times, when these lands were no longer exotic, they were replaced by the Egyptian underworld, as in Demotic texts such as Papyrus Vandier and *The Tales of Setne* (Moers 2001: 282).

Old Kingdom texts dealing with travel, such as biographies, official documents, and expedition texts, differ from travel texts of later times, for they portray travel “as a matter of economic or political concern” (Loprieno 2003: 36). The journeys within these texts do not lead to foreign and unexplored places, nor do the protagonists show any fear of transgressing borders (Loprieno 2003: 36).

In the texts of the Old Kingdom, the travel motif is not developed fictively as it is in later times. They are no travelogues written to entertain the reader. Instead of fiction, facts are stated to emphasize the traveler’s outstanding personal achievements (Köpp 2006: 248, 301), such as we see in the text of the expedition leader Harkhuf (Sethe: *Urk. I*: 120 - 131).

The travel narratives from the Middle and New Kingdoms constitute a genre of their own. They display their fictionality via the topic of transgressing boundaries and the motif of traveling abroad (Moers 2001: 167): “Since, if fiction is ... an act of transgressing boundaries such as the one between reality of the world and a hypothetical reality, the traveling-abroad motif becomes the ideal and predestined vehicle of literary fictionality” (Moers 1999: 51). The protagonist of fictional literature transgresses borders that separate the known world from what lies beyond, manifested in woodland or water. It is exactly where danger is lurking (Moers

2001: 191-192). Water, in its boundlessness and associated perils such as tempest and tidal wave, is a particular motif in the stories of *The Shipwrecked Sailor*, *Sinuhe*, and *Wenamun* (Moers 2001: 192). In the tale of *The Shipwrecked Sailor*, it is said: “A tempest came when we were at (high) sea. Before we could reach land, the wind rose, it got stronger and there were waves eight cubits high. It was a beam that struck me. When the ship died, none was left that were on board” (Papyrus Leningrad 1115 27-39; Galán 2005: 31). Sinuhe had to cross the Nile: “At the dinner hour, I had reached the town of Negau. I crossed the river on a rudderless raft, with the wind from the West” (Sinuhe B11-14; translated by Galán 2005: 65). He ran the risk of being swept away because the boat had no rudder (Moers 2001: 193). The story of *Wenamun* vividly expresses the dangers of water and sea journeys, e.g., “Do not come to look for danger in the sea. If you look for danger in the sea, look also at me” (Papyrus Moscow 120 2,50; translated by Galán 2005: 152) and “If the sea carries (me) and the wind pushes me towards the land where you are, will you allow that I am received to be killed, I being a commissioner of Amun?” (Papyrus Moscow 120 2,80; translated by Galán 2005: 153).

The same attitude towards water is found in *The Letter of Wermai* (Moers 2001: 195). Since overland travel is a metaphor for the path through life (Moers 2001: 220), sea journeys represent an individual’s way of life and the dangers and unpredictability of life *per se* (Moers 2001: 222). By transgressing the borders of the geographically known world and leaving his culturally predetermined life, the traveler becomes guilt-laden, for his traveling abroad implies the rejection of traditional norms and of Egyptian cultural identity (Moers 2001: 252 - 254; Baines 1982: 39 - 42). “It is exactly this aspect of individuality that is evaluated as being especially negative” (Moers 2001: 282; translated by the author). With the travel motif, the reader is advised to live his life in accordance with the principles of *maat*, for living outside of it and beyond the traditional sociocultural norms of Egyptian society leads to failure (Moers 2001: 177, 232). The risks the traveler is exposed to while abroad are the sanctions of that individuality. The traveler’s guilt is released upon his return—namely, his return not only to Egypt but to his place in society.

Bibliographic Notes

The most comprehensive treatment of this topic is Köpp (2006, 2008 a and b). For a short introduction see Baines (2004, 2007). For travel as a motif in literature see Moers (1999, 2001), Loprieno (2003), and Galán (2005).

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- Figure 1. The oldest known wagon from ancient Egypt, equipped with four disc wheels. Tomb of Sobeknakht, Second Intermediate Period, Elkab. (Tyler and Clarke 1896: pl. 2.)
- Figure 2. Khuiwer in his donkey litter—the only suitable mode of traveling for the elite in the Old and Middle Kingdoms, and most likely for high dignitaries on expeditions as well. Tomb of Khuiwer, 5th Dynasty, Giza. (Erman 1887: 649.)
- Figure 3. The chariot as a prestigious mode of locomotion: Akhenaten and Nefertiti riding in their chariots, accompanied by high officials and princesses, who ride in chariots as well. Tomb of Panchesi, 18th Dynasty, Amarna. (Davies 1905: pl. 13: detail.)
- Figure 4. Replica of an Egyptian chariot, based on the chariot in the Museo Egizio de Firenze (no. 2678) and those from the tomb of Tutankhamen. Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum Hildesheim (PM 7). (© Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum Hildesheim. Photograph by Shahrok Shalchi.)
- Figure 5. Traveling bed of Tutankhamen, folded to one third of its size by hinges. Tomb of Tutankhamen, 18th Dynasty, Valley of the Kings, Luxor, Museum of Egyptian Antiquities, Cairo (JE 62018). (Carter and Mace 1923: pl. 31.)