

INFLUENCE OF THE PHARAONIC HERITAGE ON THE EGYPTIAN SOCIETY IN THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

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Article info.

Article history:

Received: 9-2-2023

Accepted: 20-5-2023

Doi: 10.21608/ejars.2023.330917

Keywords:

Pharaonism

Nationalism

Revolution 1919

Pyramids

Sphinx

Tutankhamun

EJARS – Vol. 13 (2) – Dec. 2023: 343-352

Abstract:

The birth of pharaonism was due to Ahmad Lutfi Al-Sayid who was interested in the history of ancient Egypt and its monuments. He tried to awaken the feeling of national pride among the Egyptians. The apogee of this tendency was in the 20s and 30s of the 20th century. Several themes of the pharaonic heritage ensure the continuity between ancient Egypt and modern Egypt, from the beginning of the 19th century until the revolution of 1952. The pyramids, the sphinx, Tutankhamun and Isis have crossed time. These themes are expressed through literature, art, postage stamps and banknotes. Although there are - until today - areas that are inspired by ancient Egypt, this flow of pharaonism did not really reach the people. One of the reasons for the reluctance of Egyptians to accept this tendency was that its proponents did not correctly identify the character of the people.

1. Introduction

The birth of *pharaonism* is linked to Egyptian nationalism, which evolved during the 19th century owing to *Rifaa Al-Tahtawi*, considered by some intellectuals as the father of national thought [1]. Before *Al-Tahtawi*, only the *milla* united the Arab east. This scholar is the first Egyptian, in modern Egypt, who treated the history of ancient Egypt. He believes that there is historical continuity between the time of the ancient Egyptians and the contemporary era. From the era of *Al-Tahtawi*, many intellectuals contributed to the development of national feeling in the modern sense, the most famous is *Ahmad Lutfi Al-Sayid*. The nation was at the center of his thinking. Exploring the monuments of ancient Egypt, he plunged into its history, in order to awaken this sense

of national pride among Egyptians. He inspired the Egyptian Union which created an influential current and will allow the development of the *pharaonism*, during the years 20 and 30 of the 20th century. The latter relied on the academic world to spread its ideas in the political, cultural and artistic fields [2]. Among the writers of the pharaonic trend, *Hussein Hikal*, one of the most involved, called the national intellectuals, as well as all the Egyptians, to become aware of their past. The main aim was to confirm the attachment of modern Egyptians to their ancient heritage. This tendency reached its peak in the 20s [3]. Four constituent themes of the pharaonic heritage ensure the continuity between ancient Egypt and modern Egypt, from the beginning of

the 19th century until the revolution of 1952. The pyramids, the sphinx, *Tutankhamun* and *Isis* have crossed time. The themes are expressed through modern Egyptian poetry, songs, novels, sculpture, painting, architecture, postage stamps and banknotes.

2. Methodological Study

This article is a descriptive article in content analysis. The objective is to determine the degree of association between the selected variables, and it also seeks to describe the content. It is a research over a long period of time, which took place from the beginning of the 19th century until the end of the 50_s of the 20th century. We are talking about longitudinal research. A comparison is made between the beginning and end measure (and intermediate measures) of four themes of the Pharaonic heritage ensuring the continuity between ancient Egypt and modern Egypt. The objective of longitudinal research is to map a development over a specific period (beginning of the 19th century until the end of the 50_s of the 20th century). This article is one of the inferential articles, as it goes beyond the description of apparent content to reveal underlying meanings and read between the lines. The historical method was also used, with the aim of reaching past events. The generation of the 1920_s is strongly influenced by the great causes that drive the Arab world in general and Egypt in particular: nationalism, the 1919 revolution, the modernization of structures and ways of thinking, the intellectual crisis, the problems people in power and their government policies as well as other social-political issues. Egyptian society is experiencing upheavals in its economic, social and political structures. The supporters of *Pharaonism* in turn opt for another way of thinking. Our global problem will initially revolve around the following questions: what are the elements of ancient Egypt that are most used in modern Egypt, the height of *Pharaonism*,

the decline of this trend and the reason that led to this fall. Our approach can be summed up as follows: He has been observing each element- among the four that have been chosen- from the 19th century until the middle of the 20th century. To find out which of the elements has been used the most in each area. It was analyzed the period most influenced by the era of ancient Egypt is throughout the period of Modern Egypt. Which was the reason why this period has adopted this trend, as well as why it has declined.

2.1. The pyramids

2.1.1. Poetry

Even in the middle age, before Egypt was unnoticed in Arab poetry, some poets spoke of the pyramids. *Al Barudi* is among the first poets of the modern era who spoke in depth about the pyramids. He had resided near the pyramids for a month only to contemplate them [4]. Another poet, *Ismail Sabri* who belongs to the school of resurrection and renewal, also wrote about the pyramids. His poems refer to the Egyptians' love for glory, their will to master their architectural genius, not out of fear, but out of love for Pharaoh [4]. *Hafiz Ibrahim*, "the poet of the Nile", among his many works, "Egypt speaks for itself", has sublimated the pyramids in his work [5]. *Ahmad Shawqi* the prince of poets is the most prolix writer on ancient Egypt. He was impressed by the pyramids, even during his exile in Andalusia, he did not forget the pyramids, dreaming of their splendor [6]. The prince of poets was so fascinated by the pyramids that after his return from exile, he chose to reside in Giza because of the proximity of the Nile and the pyramids.

2.1.2. Songs

Song and music are associated with theater. *Munira Al Mahdiya* was the first woman to sing and act in plays influenced by ancient Egypt. In 1920, in the play *Kulaha yumin* (there are only two days left); she praised the builder of the great pyramid

Khufu by singing. In the operetta *Shahrazade (Scheherazade)*, one of the works of *Sayid Darwich* entitled "I am the Egyptian", the composer equates the Egyptian with the timelessness of the pyramids. This song has been taken up by *Mohamad Al Bahr*, *Hamid Mursi* and many others. The national anthem, the one from 1923 to 1936, evokes the eternal pyramids. Moreover, written by the Egyptian writer *Mustafa Sadiq Al Rafii* and composed by Safar Ali, the song is now the anthem of the Egyptian Police Academy.

2.1.3. Novels

Fascinated by ancient Egypt since his high school days, the writer *Naguib Mahfuz* translated the book "Ancient Egypt", written by *James Baikie* to improve his English. He included the pyramids in one of his first novels, entitled "Hikmat Khufu" (The Wisdom of Cheops), but his teacher *Salama Mussa* changed the title to "Abas Al Aqdar" (The absurdity of Predestination). He published it in 1939, this novel dealing with the life in ancient Egypt [7].

2.1.4. Postage stamps

2.1.4.1. Stamps of current use

The first issue of stamps that was inspired by the civilization of ancient Egypt was issued on August 1, 1867, fig. (1), about a year after the first stamps were issued. In the center of this stamp appears the pyramid, and in front of it, the sphinx in an oval frame [8].



Figure (1) Shows stamp issued in 1867 (After: <http://stamps.bibalex.org/Presentation/Stamps.aspx>).

The stamps issued on January 1, 1872 and December 15, 1884 bore the same design. In the late 1880s, *Khedive Tawfiq* ordered that the Egyptian pound be made a monetary

unit, worth one hundred piasters. The piaster was divided into ten thousandths, instead of 40 paras. From January 1, 1888 to 1906, the Postal Authority issued a new edition with the same pattern [9]. January 8, 1914 was considered a breakthrough in the history of postal stamps. The Postal Authority decided to issue a series of stamps, ten in number, bearing different images, each representing an Egyptian monument, instead of the sphinx and the pyramid. Six of these ten images were inspired by ancient Egypt. The stamp with a value of 4 thousandths carried the image of the pyramids [8]. Following the independence of Egypt, *Sultan Fouad* took the title of his majesty the king of Egypt on March 15, 1922. The stamps then changed: the image of the king - whether *Fouad* or his successor *Faruq* - appeared on the stamps, sometimes alone or with the pyramids [8].

2.1.4.2. Government stamps

In 1907, the authority decided to use as government stamps, those of the years 1884 and 1888 (the pyramid and the sphinx) on which were added the initials O.H.H.S. These are the first letters of the words on his highness's service (the *Khedive Abbas*) in English. In 1922, he decided to replace O.H.H.S by O.H.E.M.S, abbreviation of the expression On His Egyptian Majesty's Service, in English [10].

2.1.4.3. Air mail

On the occasion of the first flight between Cairo and Baghdad, the postal authority issued the first air stamp in 1926. The pyramids of Giza were featured on these stamps, with a plane flying over them [8].

2.1.4.4. Commemorative stamps

On February 1, 1938, Egypt organized an international congress on wire and wireless communications (telephone, telegraph, radio) [11]. The pyramids of Giza appear on this stamp, and next to them, a wired telegraph pole [8]. In Cairo, on the occasion of the international congress of air navigation in the Middle East, from October 1st to 21st

1946, the post office issued a stamp showing a plane flying over the pyramids [8].

2.1.5. Banknotes

On the bill of five Egyptian pounds, issued on January 10, 1899, appear two palm trees and two pyramids, fig. (2) [12]. On the bill of 5 Egyptian pounds, issued on September 1, 1913, are represented two feluccas sailing on the Nile in front of the pyramids [12].

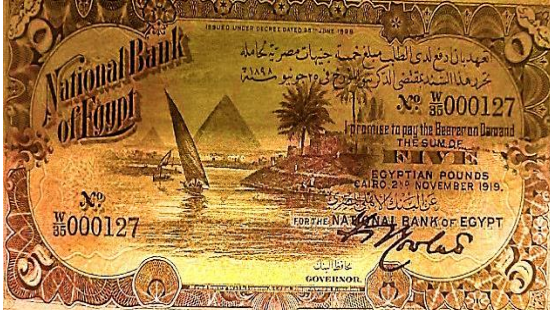


Figure (2) Shows landscape of the pyramids- M. Ḥanafī, mawsū'at wa katalōg al 'omlāt al maṣrīya al banknōt al maṣrī (After: *Encyclopedia and catalog of Egyptian banknotes*).

2.2. The sphinx

2.2.1. Poetry

In *Al Barudi's* poems, the sphinx fascinates by its presence crouching between the pyramids, its gaze turned towards the east (the dawn) [4]. As for *Ahmad Shawqi*, neither the pyramids nor the sphinx left his imagination during his exile. Among the best poems about the sphinx that *Shawqi* wrote, he wonders about its longevity and the mystery that it symbolizes since the dawn of time. For *Shawqi*, the ever-present sphinx embodies the hope of the country, in the face of a dark period that he experienced during his lifetime [6].

2.2.2. Sculpture

The sculptor *Mahmoud Mokhtar*, admitted at the creation of the School of Fine Arts in Cairo in 1908, the first Egyptian to join the Paris school of fine arts in 1912. He sent, in 1914, two works to the salon of French artists, a sculpture of 10 cm high, under the name of *Aida* and a life-size bust with the name of *Mona Lisa*. The first was

approved to be exhibited, under it was written: "Aida love of the slaves of the Egyptian sculptor *Mahmoud Mokhtar*, disciple of M. Laplagne and Coutan". A few days later, *Mokhtar* wins the annual competition of the school of fine arts, being the first to more than one hundred and two students. Thus, this statue is the first Egyptian work to be exhibited in a foreign exhibition [13]. Then he sculpted the famous statue "The awakening of Egypt", fig. (3). His model was exhibited at the Paris international salon in 1920. The sculpture representing the sphinx rising, accompanied by a peasant woman revealing herself, symbolizes the political, social and cultural transformation [14]. In this symbolism, if the peasant girl seems to represent the current Egypt waking up the sphinx, *Mokhtar* explains that it is actually based on it. The day of the inauguration of this monument, on May 20, 1928, on the square of *Bab Al Hadid* (the station of Cairo), the press qualifies *Mokhtar* as the first Egyptian sculptor since the pharaohs [15]. Until then, there were no such statues in Egypt in public squares; only kings and great statesmen, such as *Nubar pasha*, *Lazughli* and *Suleiman pasha*, were represented.

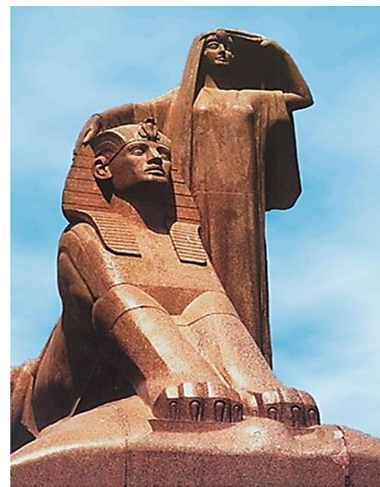


Figure (3) Shows *Mahmoud Mokhtar*, the monument The awakening of Egypt; facing Cairo Univ. of and the zoological garden. Cairo.

Similarly, *Leopold Savine* sculpted the statue of the revolutionary *Mustafa Kamil*. After a

model was made in Paris in 1910, the British prevented the erection of the statue in Cairo, fearing a popular uprising. In 1921, the statue was temporarily erected in the courtyard of a school, named after *Mustafa Kamil*, in the *Khoronfich* district. The official inauguration took place on May 14, 1940, in the presence of king *Faruq*, in *Sawaris* square, which was renamed after the revolutionary *Mustafa Kamil* [14]. The sculpture represents him with his left hand resting on the head of a sphinx, symbolizing the heritage of the past. Thus, the nation is represented by *Mustafa Kamil*, associating with the glorious past symbolized by the sphinx.

2.2.3. Architecture

In 1867, Egypt participated in the universal exhibition in Paris, which hosted buildings representative of the national architecture of the participants. The *Khedive Ismail*, anxious of his fame on the international scene [16], had recourse to the French Egyptologist *Auguste Mariette*, to present the Egyptian pavilion. This building, fig. (4) composed of elements of different temples, as *Denderah*, *Edfu*, *Kom Ombo* and *Philae*, is surrounded by columns preceded by an alley of sphinxes [17]. For the first time in the west, artifacts from the *Bulaq* Museum were exhibited, among them the jewels of Queen *Iahhotep*.



Figure (4) Shows universal exhibition of 1867; temple of Hathor (After: *Pierre Petit*, *French National Archives*, F/12/11872/2).

Other representations of the winged sphinx attracted attention at the end of the 19th century: *) The doorpost in a house in the *Al-Sakakini* district. *) The vestibule of the *Shepherd* hotel. *) The lintel of the window

of the *Princes' Club*. In Cairo, during the agricultural and industrial exhibition of 1926, a building entirely inspired by ancient Egypt was assembled for the first time. An alley of sphinxes preceded the pavilion [18].

2.2.4. Postal stamps

On the stamps of common use, the sphinx is often associated with the pyramids. On the stamp of 5 thousandth issued in 1914, the sphinx appears there, alone, of face [19]. The sphinx is alone on the governmental stamps of 1922, with the initials O.H.E.M.S. [8].

2.2.5. Banknotes

The sphinx is drawn on the banknote of 50 piasters, fig. (5) emitted on January 1, 1899, as well as on that of August 1, 1914 [12].

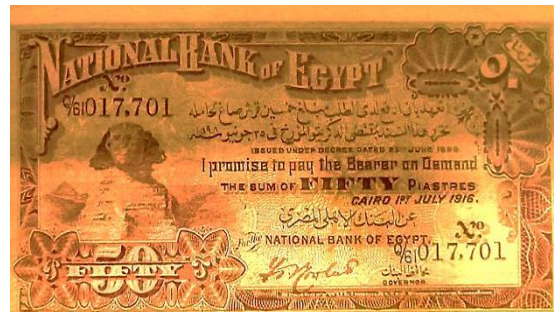


Figure (5) Shows the sphinx and a pyramid- M. Ḥanafī, mawsū'at wa katalōg al 'omlāt al maṣriya al banknōt al maṣrī [12].

2.3. Tutankhamun

The discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb awakened the Egyptians to their ancient history, and aroused new inspirations among artists in particular.

2.3.1. Poetry

Impressed by the discovery of the tomb and its treasures, *Shawqi* composed several poems, the first of which is a hymn to the sun. The second speaks of the young king, the poet believing that *Tutankhamun* should have remained in secret in his tomb. In another long poem, he marvels at the king's treasure. He bitterly contrasts the ancient power of ancient Egypt with its weakness at the time of the discovery of the tomb. He ends with a wish for the country to recover its glory [6].

2.3.2. Songs

The sultana of song *Munira Al Mahdiya*, a committed singer, sang a *taqtuqa* inspired by ancient Egypt "Our father is *Tutankhamun*". It was recorded on disc in 1922. It is considered the first song that evokes Egyptian monuments. This *taqtuqa* incites the people to resist the British occupation. Another singer, *Naïma Al-Masriya*, took up this theme from *Tutankhamun*. She, on the other hand, did not want to challenge the English or incite the Egyptians to resistance as *Munira Al Mahdiya* did. Under the guise of humor, she combines a sense of patriotism and debauchery. This *taqtuqa* bears the title "Go get me a suit". Another singer, *Mustafa Amin*, sang a *taqtuqa* titled *Tutankhamun*. He praises the treasure of this child king and of this very developed culture of our ancestors, four millennia ago.

2.3.3. Postage stamps

Tutankhamun's mask appears only on one of the stamps of the international exhibition of contemporary art, March 9, 1947. On this stamp, two identical values are printed (for example 50+50, etc.), one of the two being used for charitable purposes [20].

2.3.4. Banknotes

The bust of the young king is represented on the one pound note issued on April 23, 1930, as well as on that of May 12, 1952 [12]. *Tutankhamun* appears on the front of the 50 piaster banknote, as well as on the 5 Egyptian pound note, issued on May 8, 1952 [12].

2.4. Isis

2.4.1. Poetry

Like *Ismail Sabri*, *Shawqi* admired the majesty and splendor of the temples. He composed some verses on the kiosk of *Anas Al Wugud (Trajan)* at the temple of Philae. The poet wonders about the extent of the kingdom of Isis, its deification and the practice of worship [4].

2.2.3. Novels

Among the best known works of *Tawfiq Al Hakim*, *Awdat Al Ruh* (The Return of the

Soul), published in 1933, is based on two approaches. The first, with a hidden meaning, comes from the *Osirian* legend (*Isis and Osiris*), describing the faithfulness of Isis who travels the country in search of the scattered members of *Osiris*, in view of his resurrection. A second one symbolizes the union of Egyptians in the face of the British occupation in 1919. *Saniya*, loved by three neighboring brothers, manages to maintain their union despite everything; they commit themselves to fight against the colonizer to resurrect the country, just as *Isis* resurrected *Osiris* [21]. Another work by the same author, "*Shahrazad (Scheherazade)*", published in 1934, narrates the life of the couple *Shahrazad* and *Shahrayar (Shahriar)* from the Arabian nights. The playwright presents the heroine as a symbol of resurrection; she is an intelligent and beautiful woman who manages to transform the bloodthirsty king into a thoughtful man. She gave meaning to his life, she resurrected him. The character of *Shahrazad* is the image of *Isis* [22]. "*Isis*", published in 1952, evokes the conflict between *Osiris* and *Set*. *Isis* is the symbolic embodiment of moderation and reconciliation between the ideal and reality [23]. Another writer, *Abdel Munim Mohamed Omar*, published in 1945, "*Izisa wa Oziris (Isis and Osiris)*". He faithfully respects the legend [24].

2.4.3. Sculpture

Mahmoud Mokhtar sculpted the statue of *Isis*, fig. (6), which, is a marvelous work in white marble that represents the slender Egyptian goddess, sitting cross-legged, raising her arms behind her head. She inspires sadness and sorrow, thinking of her brother and husband *Osiris* [25]. The lines are in harmony with the smooth and naked body, the facial expression drowned in thought, the smile sketched, almost dreamy. This elegant statue embodies timeless femininity [26].



Figure (6) Shows the statue of *Isis*, artificial stone. *Mahmoud Mokhtar* Museum, Cairo.

2.4.4. Painting

Mohamed Nagui is considered one of the pioneers of the first generation of the plastic movement in Egypt and in the Arab world. In 1920, the government invited him to paint a picture for the inauguration of the *Maglis Al Choura* (The Senate) in 1922, fig. (7-a). The commission of this work is symbolic, because it must celebrate, on the one hand the end of the British protectorate, and on the other hand the promulgation of the first true constitution of Egypt in 1923. This large painting (7 m×3 m), entitled "The Renaissance of Egypt" or "The Procession of *Isis*", represents *Isis*, the mother-goddess evoking the *Osirian* legend echoing the cultural, political, economic and social resurrection of Egypt, after its independence. In 1937, *Mohamed Nagui* was entrusted with the decoration of the Egyptian section of the International Exhibition of Paris, and painted a fresco of seven paintings entitled "The tears of *Isis*", fig. (7-b). [27].



Figure (7) Shows **a.** painting entitled (The renaissance of Egypt or the procession of *Isis*, painted [28], **b.** *Mohamad Nāḡī*- decoration of the Egyptian pavilion at the international exhibition of arts and techniques in Paris in 1937 [29].

2.2.5. Postal stamps

On January 8, 1914, the postal authority emits a series of stamps. On that of 2 thousandths appears the goddess *Isis* in the form of a woman carrying two horns of cows, between which is a solar disc surmounted by a throne (its emblem) [21]. *Isis* also appears on one of the government stamps issued in 1922, with the initials O.H.E.M.S. [21].

2.2.6. Banknotes

Isis, on banknotes does not appear directly. On the other hand, it is omnipresent, on several issues of banknotes, by the representation of its temple, fig. (8-a) and the kiosk of *Trajan* in *Philae*. These include the 100 L.E. bill issued on January 15, 1899, that of March 1, 1921, that of one L.E. of July 1, 1950 and May 12, 1952, fig. (8-b), and finally that of 50 piasters of 1952 [12].





Figure (8) Shows **a.** Trajan's Kiosk on the 100 L.E., **b.** Sunken temple of Philae [12]

3. Results

Consequently, the elements dating back to ancient Egypt that have been used in modern Egypt vary from one field to another, in poetry, in songs and on stamps the pyramids have taken the lion's share. As for *Tutankhamun* and *Isis*, the child king was the most used in songs and banknotes, while the goddess occupied the first rank in novels, in painting and the second in sculpture and on banknotes. As for sculpture and architecture, the sphinx was the most discussed element. *Pharaonism* as an intellectual tendency reached its peak in the twenties and thirties of the twentieth century, after the fall of the caliphate and the emergence of nationalisms. There are several areas affected by this trend, including but not limited to: poetry, singing, novel, drawing, sculpture, architecture and other fields. However, it was not popular, as it was confined to the intellectuals. One of the most important reasons for distancing people from it is the exaggeration of some supporters of this trend in distancing themselves from Arabs and Islam. Therefore, immediately after the emergence of an Islamic stream, then an Arab one, the Egyptians who uttered the *Pharaonism*.

4. Discussion

The element -going back to ancient Egypt- most used in modern Egyptian poetry is the pyramids and the poet who was most attracted to them is *Ahmad Shawqi*. He said, "Poetry is the son of two parents: nature

and history," so it is natural that he was attracted to ancient Egypt, especially the pyramids, which hide inexplicable mysteries. There are two elements that have been mentioned most in the songs, the first is the pyramids and the second is King *Tutankhamen*. The first element - as aforementioned - attracts everyone by its mysteries. The pyramids have occupied a very high rank in the field of songs, to the level that they have been used in one of the national anthems. As for the second element, it is thanks to the discovery of its tomb in 1922 that it attracted the attention of the whole world, especially the Egyptian artists. It is important to point out that this discovery is chronologically situated a few years after the revolution of 1919 against the British, the establishment of an independent state in 1922 and the beginning of the first legislative elections coinciding with the opening of the tomb in March 1924. This child king represented in the twenties of the 20th century the symbol of rebirth, which was part of an ambitious intellectual effort to create a new image for Egypt that could lead to changing the Egyptian reality. - In modern Egyptian novels, the most used element is the goddess *Isis*, specifically her legend with her brother-husband *Osiris*. The reason that playwrights focus on the myths related to death and resurrection more than others is because the meaning of these myths is compatible with the indications of the Arabian rebirth and the resurrection of *Osiris* by *Isis* is the symbol of the renewal of the Egyptian soul resurrected after a long sleep. The sphinx is the most discussed element in the sculpture, it was used twice, one by -the first Egyptian sculptor who joined the *school of fine Art* in *Paris*- *Mahmoud Mokhtar* entitled *The revival of Egypt*, and the other by the French sculptor *Léopold Savine* representing the leader *Mustafa Kamil*. The goddess *Isis* is the most used in painting, *Mohamed Nagui*, painted two paintings, the first is the large

painting placed in the Senate bearing the name of *The Renaissance of Egypt* or *The Procession of Isis*, and the second was at the International Exhibition in Paris entitled *The Tears of Isis*. In architecture, the sphinx was the most used element preceding the entrance of the sacred place during the expeditions that took place outside and inside the country. The pyramids are the element indisputably the most represented on the stamps. This is not surprising because there is no monument in Egypt that is more famous than the pyramids, making them the best representation of the country. As for the banknotes which are the most used element by the Egyptians in an almost daily way. The goddess *Isis* represented by her temple - Philae or/and the kiosk of *Trajan*- is the most represented element on these bills. In second place comes the representation of *Tutankhamun*. *Pharaonism* reached its peak in the twenties and thirties of the twentieth century. The most important reasons for distancing people from it is the exaggeration of some supporters of this trend in distancing themselves from Arabs and Islam.

5. Conclusion

The birth of pharaonism follows the appearance of Egyptian nationalism in the second half of the 19th century. The will of Egypt's independence from the British colonizer and the discovery, in the same year, 1922, of the tomb of Tutankhamen, constitute the key elements of its development. The pharaonism was concretized through: The passion of the poet Ahmad Shawqi installed at the foot of the pyramids, evoked and expressed in poetry and on stamps, the sphinx represented in architecture and sculpture, Tutankhamun in songs and on banknotes, Isis in the novels and in painting. The Egyptians were reluctant to the development of this trend by some intellectuals, which reached its peak in the 1920s-1930s, before its decline. The biggest mistake made by the proponents of pharaonism (territorial nationalism) is considering Egypt as a distinct geographical, historical and political entity, whose origins date back to about 4 millennia. For its supporters, the country is more linked to Europe than to the East: phar-

aonism tried in vain to minimize the Arab-Islamic identity. This current did not know how to correctly identify the character of the Egyptian people. Thus, in the history of Egypt, there is no collision between Egyptian patriotism and Arab-Muslim nationalism.

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