

Publication

Ancient Egyptian Peace Traditions

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The chapter focuses on political, social, and religious aspects of peace traditions as revealed through the written and visual documentation from ancient Egypt (ca. 2500–30 BCE). Peace and peacefulness were important moral values in the sphere of social relations, often associated with Maat, the fundamental concept of justice and harmony. The attitude toward peace was more ambiguous in the political and religious spheres. The mythologically grounded perception of hostile powers threatening Egypt's existence and stability shaped the ideal of a martial pharaoh subduing all potential foes and neighboring countries. The discrepancy between real-life politics and traditional worldview appears clearly in the copies of the very detailed peace treaty concluded around 1270 BCE between Egypt under Ramesses II and the Hittite Empire. The treaty, which was copied in several temples, agrees on mutual non-aggression and assistance in parity terms between equal partners. The surrounding texts, however, mobilize traditional ideological language treating the Hittite partner king as an enemy subdued by the forceful pharaoh.

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