

EGYPTIAN INTERESTS IN WESTERN ASIA TO THE END OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM: AN EVALUATION

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The increasing interest and involvement of ancient Egypt in Western Asia over a very long span of time is a subject of absorbing interest and of real significance for the future of a part of western Asia that was to provide the arena in which many ideas and ideals were to be fused, modified and diffused westwards to Europe in much later times. In order to present a balanced appraisal and evaluation of the historical sources at our disposal, I have made use of the extensive, though by no means exhaustive, bibliography provided in the new edition (partly still in pre-publication fascicle form) of the Cambridge Ancient History. I have been able to check most of the items and the references in the text itself, and I have widened the range of references by including references to other and more recent publications.

The thesis I present here is new in some respects, and it is my hope that this contribution to a volume in honour of my old friend and sometime colleague at Leeds will have at least something to offer in a field of study that has long been dear to E. C. B. MacLaurin's heart. I have chosen the older period of Egyptian-Levantine relations, which may help in some measure to serve as an introduction to the contributions of his other friends and colleagues.

"To the Egyptians, Byblos was the key to the "God's Land", the Lebanon on whose steep slopes grow the timber trees they coveted. Their own country produced no tall trees except the coarse-grained palms whose trunks were suitable only for roofing and rough constructional work. Small planks of moderately fine grain, suitable for cabinet-making, could be obtained from the tamarisk, the sider, and the sycamore-fig, but the twenty-foot beams which spanned the floors and roofs of the royal tombs of the First Dynasty at Saqqara and Abydos came from conifers such as pine, fig or cedar and even in predynastic graves traces of coniferous wood are found which can only have come from the north."¹ This quotation, in a way, sets the path and leads the way direct to the heart of this study. Byblos and the Lebanon, within the wider Levantine whole, were probably the area of Egypt's earliest interest abroad, aside from neighbouring Sinai. The interest

1. M. S. Drower & J. Bottéro, *Cambridge Ancient History (CAH)*, 3rd ed. I. Pt. 2, 346. For examples of the use made of various woods see *idem*.

was, in earliest times at least, undoubtedly created by real need, but it is the purpose of this article to 'spell out' the changing pattern of Egypt's interests in the Levant within the much wider—and contemporary—horizons of the whole Near East.

I. E. S. Edwards offers the following general statement: 'It is unlikely that any close or regular connexions were maintained between Egypt and the neighbouring countries in the period immediately preceding and following the institution of the united monarchy. The evidence, admittedly sparse, points rather to brief migratory movements towards the Nile Valley, intermittent commercial dealings and isolated military expeditions by the Egyptians either in defence of their frontiers or to obtain a commodity not readily available at home.'²

Contacts between Egypt and the Levant before the Early Dynastic Period, i.e., before about 3100 B.C., whether direct or indirect, are inferred from the presence of beads of glass and of deep blue faience³ manufactured in the Nile Valley from pre-Dynastic times on.⁴ There is no doubt that Egypt's first interests in the East were in the north-west Sinai region. Expeditions to Sinai must have taken place as long as the turquoise mines were being worked, and military campaigns, even if on a very small scale, must have been undertaken whenever any threat to the working of these was posed. Such campaigns, to which reference is made below, were solely concerned with preventing the bedouin of the area from stopping production or from barring the roads or from plundering the caravans to and from the mining sites. We shall hear more and more on this theme, and it will be seen that this theme may have been greatly overworked in some modern accounts.

In the early part of the Early Dynastic Period, in the middle of the reign of Djer (Iti) of Dyn. I, there is a year called "The Year of Smiting the Land of Setjet". This reference may be only to Sinai, though later it was to Western Asia as a whole, itself an indication of Egypt's increasing influence through the centuries. During Djer's reign four bracelets of turquoise were brought back to Abydos.⁵ In the reign of his successor but one, Den (Khasty)⁶ an ivory docket from Abydos shows the king smiting a kneeling 'Asiatic' with a mace. The inscription which relates to this scene

2. *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 40.

3. R. J. & L. S. Braidwood, *Excavations in the Plain of Antioch I. The Earlier Assemblages, Phases A-J* (Chicago, 1960).

4. A. Lucas, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries* (London, 1962), ed. 4, 157, 179f. W. M. F. Petrie, *Prehistoric Egypt* (London, 1920), 43.

5. W. M. F. Petrie, *The Royal Tombs of the Earliest Dynasties* (London, 1901), Part 2.

6. Or 'Wedimu' or 'Dewen'.

reads: "The first time of smiting the Easterners".⁷ The people indicated may have encountered the royal forces in Sinai. They may be regarded as untameable, intractable nomads, ever ready to attack and plunder supply wagons; they may have been part-settled there; or they could have belonged to the all-pervasive, ever-infiltrating pastoral nomads from the Lower Levant, i.e., Canaan. In any case, this represents a type of situation which became more and more frequent as time went on.⁸

The tomb of the last king of Dyn. I, namely Qa(a), at Abydos⁹ yielded up the figure of a bound Asiatic captive carved on a gaming-piece. In addition, there were trading relations between Egypt and the Lower Levant as early as Dyn. I, for pitchers with handles, of red-burnished pottery, stump-based, have been uncovered on Palestinian sites of the Early Bronze age. This Egyptian-type ware is best known under the name "Abydos-ware" or "Abydos Vase".¹⁰ In the Sharon Plain an archaic cylinder seal, and from Gath (Tell Gath) a sherd with the name of King Narmer, further suggest Egyptian-S. Levantine commercial relations.¹¹ Likewise various Palestinian pottery wares have been found in sizeable quantities in Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom Egyptian sites.¹² These various facts must be regarded, even at a conservative evaluation, as indicative of an Egyptian presence in the Lower Levant.

The presence of Egyptian wares much further north at Byblos, that city and port of Lebanon (Upper Canaan) that was to be the 'Mecca' of Egyptian-Levantine maritime trade for so long, is decisive for the thesis that Egypt, with its natural shortage or complete lack of a wide range of materials, especially timber, resins and certain types of stone, must have been in a commercial relationship with Canaan certainly as early as the beginning of

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7. P. E. Newberry & G. A. Wainwright, "King Udy-mu (Den) and the Palermo Stone" in *Ancient Egypt* (1914), 148-55.
 8. See further *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 27 for a note on the possible identification of the Easterners" with the nomadic Asiatics mentioned in the Palermo Stone.
 9. W. M. F. Petrie, *The Royal Tombs of the First Dynasty* (London, 1960), Part 1.
 10. E. Anati, *Palestine before the Hebrews* (London, 1961), 353f. H. J. Kantor, "Further Evidence for Early Mesopotamian Relations with Egypt", in *Jour. of Near East Stud.* 11 (1952), 195.
 11. S. Yeivin, "Early Contacts between Canaan and Egypt" in *Israel Explor. Jour.* 10, No. 4 (1960), 193f. W. A. Ward, "Relations between Egypt and the East Mediterranean from Prehistoric Times to the end of the Middle Kingdom" in *Jour. of Econ. & Soc. Hist. of the Orient* 6 (1963), 1f.
 12. W. Helck, *Die Beziehungen Ägyptens zu Vorderasien im 3. und 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (Wiesbaden, 1962), 31f. Kantor, *op. cit.*, 195f. Ward, *op. cit.*, 6f.

Dyn. I and probably much earlier.¹³ Certain objects were found below a temple pavement (of Middle Kingdom times) and thus belonged to the earlier temple which had been rebuilt. It is usual to regard the objects—a polished tone vase with an Egyptian name:¹⁴ the figure of a squatting ape: a gold head: two gaming-pieces:¹⁵ a slate palette in the form of a bird, typical of pre-dynastic workmanship¹⁶—as propitiary offerings made to the *ba'alat* of Byblos, the local goddess. Such donations tie in with the Egyptian mercantile activity to procure Lebanese timber and resins. We shall return to this theme of gifts-for-favour. For the present it is sufficient to observe the type of the objects. They are clearly not cultic objects; they are not royal in *genre*. Rather they are curios, curiosities, rarities, sophisticated 'toys' in a sense. They must have been gifts.

There can be little doubt that maritime trade between Egypt (Delta) and the Levant began in very early times, since the best evidence of Egyptian interests in the area was found at a seaport, Byblos. The question how early trade with Byblos began is a vexed one, and it is uncertain whether it was already established, even if occasional and sporadic, as early as the time of King Narmer, the first king of Dyn. I. It is reasonably certain, on the other hand, that Egyptian needs in the Old Kingdom period were much the same, at least in type if not in quantity, as in Early Dynastic times. The best support for a preference for maritime rather than landborne trade is to be found in the obvious difficulties in transporting goods, particularly heavy and cumbersome timber, by land through Canaan and Sinai, in the face of undisciplined and uncivilised bedouin—at a time before the area in question had achieved a level of true culture. The southern Mesopotamians faced not dissimilar problems from plundering nomads, but they had the advantage that they could float timber and other bulky goods on the Euphrates.

It is clear that once the timber of the Lebanon mountain forests had been felled and the branches lopped off, the lumber was transported to Byblos, perhaps by way of the Adonis river

13. But there is no indication of Egyptian influence in the 4th millennium levels at Byblos. For the early 3rd millennium when Egyptian objects began to appear see especially P. Montet, "Notes et documents pour servir à l'histoire des relations entre l'ancienne Égypte et la Syrie" in *Kémi* I (1928), 19f., 83f. Helck, *op. cit.*, 26. H. H. Nelson, "Fragments of Egyptian Old Kingdom Stone Vases from Byblos" in *Berytus* I (1934), 19f., Ward, *op. cit.*, 1f.

14. M. Dunand, *Fouilles de Byblos* (Paris, 1939-58), I, 26-7.

15. These three items may rather belong to proto-dynastic times. See P. Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte* (Paris, 1928-9), I, 91 (fig 38, No. 176), 98 (No. 256), 103 (Nos. 333-4), and II, plates lv-lvi.

16. Dunand, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*

nearby. It has been suggested that the actual felling of the trees was done by Egyptian lumberjacks (or by mixed gangs of Egyptians and Syrians supervised by Egyptian overseers), since a copper axe found in the river bed (has been found) which was engraved in hieroglyphs with the name of the lumberjack gang.¹⁷ If it is true that Egyptians, or Egyptians and Syrians, comprised such gangs, there is an implication here that Egyptians could have been settled more or less permanently for the purpose of accomplishing and managing the tree-felling. This in turn could explain some of the many objects of Egyptian manufacture found in the area; thus one must exercise caution in assuming that every object of Egyptian type or manufacture found in the Lebanon is an import by way of commercial exchange.

We turn now to the Old Kingdom period (Dyns 3-8, ca. 2686-2160), a time of monumental building (from the Step Pyramid on). This was also a period of ship-building. Amongst the personages of Dyn. 3 (ca. 2686-13) known to us as having been engaged in public works is a ship-builder, Bedjines.¹⁸ In the time of this dynasty one of the fortresses later described as being in foreign territory (Palestine) is mentioned, suggesting Egyptian interests beyond Sinai as early as this.¹⁹

For Dyn. 4 (ca. 2613-2494) we learn from the Snef(e)ru Annals (on the Palermo Stone) and the Cairo Fragment no. 4²⁰ that great ships made of cedar and other coniferous wood were built under King Snef(e)ru, and that forty shiploads of cedar were brought to Egypt. Cedar logs were used in the upper chamber of the Bent Pyramid at Dahshur.²¹ This evidence, coupled with the fact that a stone bowl fragment with the name 'Khasekhemwy' (last king of Dyn. 2) was discovered at Byblos,²² clearly indicates the long

17. M. S. Drower & J. Böttero, *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 347-8. See also R. Rowe, *A Catalogue of Egyptian Scarabs, Scaraboids, Seals and Amulets in the Palestine Archaeological Museum* (Cairo, 1936), 283f. plate 36. For use of Lebanese timber in Egyptian ship-building see T. Sävve-Söderberg, *The Navy of the Eighteenth Egyptian Dynasty* (Uppsala & Leipzig, 1946), 47f. K. Sethe, "Ein ägyptisches Denkmal des alten Reiches von der Insel Kythera" in *Zeitsch. f. Ägypt. Spr. u. Altertumskunde* 53 (1917), 10f. Ch. Boreux, *Études de nautique égyptienne: l'art de la navigation en Égypte jusqu' à la fin de l'ancien empire* (Cairo, 1925), 462. Ward, *op. cit.*, 44 n. 1.
18. *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 160.
19. H. G. Fisher, "A scribe of the army in a Saqqara mastaba of the early fifth dynasty" in *Jour. Near East. Stud.* 18 (1959), 233f. See further below under Dyn. 6.
20. *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 167.
21. A. Fakhry, *The Bent Pyramid of Dahshur* (Cairo, 1954).
22. P. Montet, "Notes et documents", 84, fig. 1. *Byblos et l'Égypte. Quatre campagnes de fouilles à Gebeil* (1921-1924) (Paris, 1928), 271.

establishment of maritime dealings between Syro-Lebanon and Egypt.²³

The question whether Egypt exercised political or even military control in the Levant, and particularly in Canaan, at this time, is unanswerable. However, we may take note of the fact, in the meantime, that Egypt's other great material interest, beyond its eastern frontier in Sinai, turquoise, was protected by force. In the Wadi Maghara a rock-carving portrays King Snef(e)ru striking down a local chieftain. Such military operations, though probably on a very small scale, were long to be characteristic of Egyptian foreign policy. The Dyn. 3 kings, Sanakhte, Neterirykhet (Djoser) and Sekhemkhet, were obliged to lead troops to the area of the Sinai turquoise mines in order to ensure their continued working and logistics, and the freedom of the access roads. The statement of W. Stevenson Smith that 'it does not seem to have been necessary to repeat this show of force until the time of Sahure in the Fifth Dynasty'²⁴ is an example of the *argumentum e silentio*. Egypt throughout her long history was rarely free of nomadic interference on and infiltration through its north-eastern border, the Sinai Gate.

Evidence for Dyn. 4 (ca. 2613-2494) is meagre in the extreme and consists of fragments with the names of Khufu (Cheops) and Menkaure (Mycerinus).²⁵ Snef(e)ru's burial chamber inside the southern pyramid at Dahshur to this day preserves cedar beams which serve as props. In 1954 a sixty-foot funerary bark of Khufu, hermetically sealed in the limestone by the great Giza pyramid, was found with furnishings complete. The boat was made of cedar wood, the second oldest Lebanese cedar relic so far discovered.²⁶

In Dyn. 5 (ca. 2494-2345) may have occurred a deliberate extension of maritime operations, particularly as first with the Aegean. There are several indications of this. On the island of Cythera (off the tip of the Peloponnesus) was found a marble cup incised with the name of Userkaf (1st king),²⁷ The chief argument in support of an expansion of Egyptian maritime (and land) activities during this dynasty is that Egypt was now engaged in great architectural and artistic developments (some experimental), occasioning an increasing need for a variety of materials not available in Egypt or Sinai (or in the south and west). The preceding

23. For the relevant Death of Osiris legend and the Ramesside Romance of the Two Brothers in this connection see *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 348-9.

24. *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 167.

25. P. Montet, "Notes et documents", 85, fig. 3. *Byblos et l'Égypte*, plate 125: p. 75, fig. 53, No. 64, plate 39.

26. P. K. Hitti, *Lebanon in History* (London, 1962), 67.

27. A. E. Evans, "Further Discoveries of Cretan and Aegean Script" in *Jour. Hell. Stud.* 17 (1897), 349. Sethe, *op. cit.*, 55-8.

period of Egyptian history was, comparatively speaking, a 'time of small things'. Expansion of internal activity led inevitably to expansion of external activity, and the proof of this is increasingly available from this dynasty on. It is also to be noted that Egyptian involvements in Libya increased about the same time, and the nature of the involvement abroad may be compared, to a degree, with similar enterprises on the part of the Mesopotamian Agade Dynasty (*ca.* 2371-2209).

According to W. Stevenson Smith 'state-manipulated foreign trade rather than actual conquest'²⁸ was responsible for such 'booty' as tethered bears depicted on a relief fragment from the Syrian mountains, and one-handed, tall-necked Jars²⁹ from the tomb of Queen Hetepheres (Dyn. 4) and other Giza tombs.

Such 'booty' has been regarded also as objects brought back by trading expeditions, for on the east wall of the corridor behind the court of Hetepheres' tomb sea-going vessels are portrayed. These are manned by Egyptians, but they also have on board bearded Asiatics who are clearly visitors and probably traders from Byblos.³⁰ Other indications from the period of expanded external activities are found in the mention in the Palermo Stone of produce from Sinai's "Turquoise Land" and from Punt on the Somali coast.³¹ That some military support was needed for some at least of such trading adventures is seen in the fact that Sahure (Dyn. 5) had to pacify the local nomads at the Wadi Maghara in Sinai.³²

Expeditions to the Wadi Maghara took place in later reigns of Dyn.5, e.g., that of Djedkare Isesi, and under Unas (Unis) large sea-going vessels returning to Egypt from a trading expedition are shown with bearded Asiatics. Since stone vase fragments are found at Byblos with the name of Unas inscribed, we may see the probability that by the end of Dyn. 5 a regular maritime trade between the Delta and Byblos had become well-established.³³

However, Drower, and Bottéro prefer to see in early Dyn. 5's external affairs clear evidence that 'Egyptian armies were not confining their operations to defensive encounters with bedawin on

28. *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 183.

29. For the so-called "Syrian bottles" with handles and narrow necks found at many sites and imported into Egypt see R. J. & L. S. Braidwood, *op. cit.*, 270, fig. 211 Nos. 11-15, plate 28 Nos. 12, 17. See further Kantor, *op. cit.*, 85. M. E. Mallowan, *Twenty-five Years of Mesopotamian Discovery* (London, 1956), 49.

30. *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 183.

31. In Dyn. 5 in Sahure's reign.

32. As n. 30.

33. See S. Hassan, "The Causeway of Wnis at Saqqara" in *Zeitsch. f. Ägypt. Spr. u. Altertumskunde* 80 (1955), 136f. and *Archiv für Ägyptische Archaeologie* (Vienna, 1938), I, 179-83.

the eastern frontier or to guarding the route to the mines of Sinai, but were raiding northward into the plain of Sharon and perhaps even further afield, in the northern half of the country where the most prosperous cities of the Early Bronze Age lay'.³⁴

By the time of Dyn. 6 (*ca.* 2345-2181) the fortresses and walled settlements of the Asiatics had come under the general designation 'Wenet'. Two of these are pictured in tombs of the early pati of the dynasty as besieged by Egyptian troops.³⁵ It is thus evident that military activity as well as commercial enterprise had begun to become characteristic of Egyptian external affairs. The former almost certainly had much to do with the protection and preservation of the latter. The exact nature of the military operations in the Lower Levant (Palestine) at this time is best described as plundering and looting, while relations up till now with the Upper Levant (Syro-Lebanon) must be regarded as truly commercial, vital to the needs of a growing Egyptian consumer market of nobles who sought to emulate the kings in worldly aggrandisement, and defensible at all costs.

The long reign of Pepi (Phiops) I stands out as the period of greatest commercial and other(?) involvement in the Levant so far. His predecessor (or predecessor but one) Teti, however, is represented at Byblos by his name incised on stone vase fragments.³⁶ An inscription from the Wadi Maghara in Sinai shows Pepi I conquering Asiatic nomads.³⁷ Indeed, Pepi I may be regarded at the first Egyptian king to undertake highly organised expeditions to Sinai and beyond. We have the evidence for a series of campaigns to various quarters under Commissioner Uni.³⁸ One such campaign beyond Sinai into the Lower Levant involved troop movements by sea. 'I (Uni) made a landing at the rear of the heights of the mountain range on the north of the land of the Sand Dwellers.'³⁹ The Carmel Range is considered by most authorities to be the area in which the landing must have taken place.

34. *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 357.

35. Y. Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands in the Light of Archaeological Discovery* (London, 1963), 55, 147.

36. *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 190.

37. *Ibid.*, 191.

38. Whom Pepi I had made his special envoy to the army in Asia to ensure good relations between the chiefs of the various army contingents (Egyptian, Nubian and Libyan) and to have oversight of the army's behaviour.

39. For a full account in translation see J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, 1950), 227-8. This passage clearly indicates the extent to which Pepi's army was disciplined and well-organised.

That such voyages were a regular feature of Dyn. 6's foreign policy is suggested by one of the campaign chiefs at Aswan, who refers to voyages to Byblos and Punt.⁴⁰ Stone vessels of Pepi I's time (and Pepi II's) have been found at Byblos.⁴¹

Throughout Dyns. 3-5 considerable changes in Egyptian governmental structure and administration had taken place, the basic factor in this being the centralisation of political power in the hands of the monarch. In Dyn. 6 some transfer of power into the hands of the nobility gradually occurred. This has usually been explained as due to the dissipation of the royal resources through the unending dedicatory gifts to temples (cf. the similar, contemporary practice in Sumer) and 'political' gifts to leaders of the great provincial houses. Already in Dyn. 5 the practice of giving grants of income from land-holdings, possibly begin in Dyn. 4, had advanced so far that the monarch could no longer claim to have the sole political and economic power in Egypt. By the end of Dyn. 5 the great nomarchs and their families had achieved such wealth and influence that they could rival the monarch in prestige and real power.⁴²

Naturally monarchs endeavoured to regain their prestige and power, but it was during the reign of Pepi II that the royal efforts really began to bear fruit. The mounting confidence of the kings of Dyn. 6 had its effects in a securer hold on government and real political power. In purely economic terms we might almost have expected some signal effort to regain royal prestige; in Egyptian terms this meant the search for greater economic resources to bolster the royal prerogatives, particularly in the religious cult. Indeed, it is precisely at this time that the monarchs looked towards lands that possessed considerable natural resources which Egypt herself lacked. Commercial contacts, both direct and indirect began, with the aid of military force where necessary, in Western Asia, in Punt (Arabia), farther parts of Africa, and possibly Crete. The autobiographical inscriptions of Pepi I, Menenre Antiemsef (Methusaphis) and Pepi II are the most informative sources for our knowledge of such activity.

The increasing wealth and high standard of living enjoyed by the nobility (and hence the rising middle-class) in the provincial areas of Egypt continued under Pepi II, whose extremely long reign was markedly a period of regular trading with Egypt's nearest neighbours. Alabaster vases in the Sudan and stone vessels

40. *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 194.

41. *Idem.*

42. J. Vercoutter in *The Near East the Early Civilizations*, ed. J. Bottéro, E. Cassin and J. Vercoutter (London, 1967), 323f.

at Byblos bearing his name testify to the growing extent of Egyptian commercial activities in the latter half of Dyn. 6.

Objects ranging from the 3rd to the 6th dynasties found at Byblos, if we may conveniently summarise these, comprised 'polished axes, flint knives, cylindrical beads of alabaster, statuettes resembling those found at Hieraconpolis, and fragments of stone objects in stones such as alabaster and schist which can only have come from the Nile Valley. Most of the objects bearing royal cartouches are vases of alabaster or limestone, but during the reigns of Phiops I and II, small stone containers in the form of squatting apes nursing their young were also sent; perhaps these were designed for the sacred oils used in some ceremony or cult.'⁴³ That some of the Dyn. 6 vases were probably royal gifts sent on the occasion of a local celebration of the Egyptian *Sed*-festival of Pepi I and II has often been proposed. 'To suppose that they were intended for the ritual needs of a few Egyptian immigrants resident in Byblos is to underestimate the closeness of the links which bound Egypt and Byblos throughout their history, from the Early Dynastic period and even earlier, to the latest classical times.'⁴⁴

In the Old Kingdom period Byblos received a wide variety of merchandise in return for its exports to Egypt of timber and resins. The Levantine manufactures found in Egypt consist of items for which Syro-Lebanese craftsmen were already renowned, items of metalware, ivory, jewellery and gold, unguent vases of stone, and such soft wares as linen, corn and (later) papyrus. Since Byblos was one terminal of the East-West trade in lapis lazuli, many of Egypt's objets d'art in this material could well have come from there.⁴⁵

The question whether Egypt imported copper from the Levant as early as the Old Kingdom period is not yet adequately answered. So-called "Asiatic copper" was certainly imported in large quantities in New Kingdom times.⁴⁶

A temporary halt to Egyptian activities in Western Asia was to follow the 6th dynasty. Egypt's provinces had achieved considerable power in the face of all royal efforts and, as a consequence, there was a weakening of the central administration. It was no longer as vigorous and enterprising as it had been. The

43. *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 345. Helcke, *op. cit.*, 26, n. 64.

44. *CAH* *ibid.*

45. For detailed study see A. Lucas, *op. cit. passim* and espec. 399. Helck, *op. cit.*, 28. For the East-West trade route in the 18th century see W. F. Leemans, *Foreign Trade in the Old Babylonian Period* (Leiden, 1960), *passim* and espec. 34.

46. *CAH* II. X, §V 4th last para.

outcome was that at home the nomarchs and the great noble families became less and less beholden to the monarch. When Pepi II's lengthy reign ended *ca.* 2181, there was a dynastic crisis, a time of confusion politically and disorder socially. As Egypt's central authority crumbled, so did her activity in Western Asia.

Our knowledge of the First Intermediate Period which followed (Dy. 9-11)⁴⁷ comes principally from the "Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage". Internal Egyptian history does not concern us at this point; as for foreign affairs, we see a picture of Asiatics finding their way through the Sinai Gate during this time of political weakness and settling, permanently or temporarily, in the Delta region. This settlement seems to have lasted for a long time. It is already known that the Nile Delta was more or less occupied by Asiatics. It is not known to what extent the campaigns of Wahkare Akhtoy III⁴⁸ of Heracleopolis were successful in ousting the Asiatics from the Delta and wresting all control from them. Whatever happened, Dyn. 10 in Lower Egypt re-established control over the area and thereby made possible the re-use of the Delta ports. During the succeeding dynasty internal security was consolidated, preparing the way for the signal developments of Dyn. 12.

It was during the First Intermediate Period (*ca.* 2160-2040) that Amorites, or sub-Amorite proto-Canaanites, seem to have begun to make serious inroads into Egypt. This was by no means a new development, for we may assume that the fertile Nile Valley, particularly the Delta area, had long been an attraction for these partly-settled, pastoral peoples, some of whom lived for short periods in the northern Sinai region, moving from locality to locality according to seasonal pressures from kinsmen of other clans, or in reaction to hostile attacks from unfriendly bedouin of wholly nomadic type. The political and economic weakness then afflicting Egypt meant two things for the Levant. First, Egyptian involvement, and especially military incursions, in the area came (presumably to an end; secondly, the inflow of Semitic Asiatics through the Sinai Gate became increasingly difficult to stem. That Egyptian commercial activities declined at this time would seem likely, even if we have no direct and irrefutable evidence to that effect.

47. Disregarding Dy. 7-8 (*ca.* 2181-60) about which little is known. Dy. 9-10 (*ca.* 2160-2040) were followed, still in the First Intermediate Period, by the first five kings of Dy. 11 (i.e. *ca.* 2133-2040). The Middle Kingdom proper began with the sixth king of Dy. 11 (i.e. Nebhepetre Mentuhotpe II from *ca.* 2040).

48. Or Wahkare-Kheti according to *CAH* practice.

Ipuwer, that much quoted Egyptian sage, has left on record a gloomy picture of his time, a time when the trade with Byblos had stopped.⁴⁹ In support of this report, there is negative archaeological evidence as far as the First Intermediate Period is concerned. After Pepi II (Dyn. 6) no Levantine inscriptions bearing Egyptian royal names are known until Middle Kingdom times.⁵⁰

Recovery of Egyptian political and economic strength is attributable to Wahkare Akhtoy III (Achthoes) of Dyn. 10. Not only was the Sinai Gate more effectively sealed, but maritime activity was resumed with the Lebanon.⁵¹

Under Dyn. 11's king Mentuhotpe I⁵² Egypt's internal problems continued, but now the signs of restoration are in evidence. The struggle between the crown and the feudal nomarchs swung in favour of the former, though the time for complete recovery of the royal supremacy had not yet been reached. For our interest, Egypt's external activities in general seem to have resumed about this time.⁵³ In his 2nd year (*ca.* 2058) Mentuhotpe I sent an expedition to the Wadi Hammamat, and it was probably he who re-opened the road to the turquoise mines of Sinai, since Sesostris I (Dyn. 12) was to dedicate a statue of him at Serabit el-Khadim. Sometime later it is probable that Mentuhotpe's forces penetrated into the Lower Levant, but for this there is no secure evidence. In his 39th year Mentuhotpe sent an expedition to Lower Nubia, which may be seen as the preliminary to a series of campaigns decided by a new Egyptian expansionist policy.

Military enterprises were initiated on a projected scale by Mentuhotpe II (Dyn. 11)⁵⁴ with expeditions to the east, probably to Punt where he re-opened the mines, but there is uncertainty as to the precise target of these operations.⁵⁵ Mining in Sinai was taken up once more with vigour.⁵⁶ Under Mentuhotpe III a very large expedition was sent to carry out quarrying operations in the Wadi Hammamat to obtain stone for the royal sarcophagus.⁵⁷

49. A. H. Gardiner, *The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage from a Hieratic Papyrus in Leiden* (Leipzig, 1909).

50. Ward, *op. cit.*, 22-45, 129-55.

51. This information from the well-known "Instruction of Wahkare Akhtoy III to Merykare".

52. Seankhibtawy-Mentuhotpe.

53. J. Vercoutter, *op. cit.*, 349.

54. Seankhtawyef-Mentuhotpe.

55. W. C. Hayes, *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 485. See also J. Vercoutter, *op. cit.*, 351-2.

56. A. H. Gardiner *et al.*, *The Inscriptions of Sinai* (London, 1955) Pt. 1, plate 22 No. 70: Pt. 2, pp. 38-9, 86.

57. W. W. Hallo and W. K. Simpson, *The Ancient Near East: a History* (New York, 1971), 243.

The Middle Kingdom was a period of rising strength, politically, militarily, economically, and during this time considerable commercial activity in the Levant occurred. Ammenemes I (Dyn. 12)⁵⁸ had sufficient supplies of hard wood to mount a naval attack with a fleet of twenty ships,⁵⁹ unless he had inherited the supplies from an earlier monarch, possibly Mentuhotep II.

In the earlier part of Dyn. 12 there seems to have been, as a result of internal political and economic development, some kind of collaboration between the monarch and the nomarchs in terms of administration. This manifested itself in joint management of state revenues and income from the royal estates. It is from the reign of Sesostris I (*ca.* 1971-28) that we have the most illuminating evidence, but there is evidence also from the reign of Ammenemes I.⁶⁰ The outcome of this collaboration was royal control without any implication that the governing power of the nomarchs over the administration, political and economic, of the provinces, cleared the Delta area of Asiatic settlers who had put down roots there in large numbers during Dyn. 11, and he erected fortifications on the eastern frontier of the Delta to prevent any recurrences of Asiatic incursions. He erected also the so-called "Princes' Wall" in the east (and in the west a fortress to restrict Libyan encroachments), which was intended, by means of a series of forts, to give him maximum control over the Sinai border. His 24th year (4th year of the coregency with Sesostris I) saw an attack in the south of the Levant (Palestine).⁶²

Sesostris I (1971-28) had a long reign which has been described as a time when gold began to be extracted from the Sudanese mines and, indeed, it has been considered that the Middle Kingdom was the time of "a new motif: gold".⁶³ The middle of the twentieth century saw a change of outlook towards the Asiatics on Egypt's part. Sesostris' reign was marked by mutually good relations between the two peoples, though we must make the exception that the rough nomads on the fringe of the Sinai area and Lower Levant continued their normal practice of plundering and of disrupting wherever opportunity presented itself.

58. Amunemhet I *ca.* 1991-62.

59. K. Sethe, *Historisch-biographische Urkunden des mittleren Reich* (Leipzig, 1935). J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt. Historical Documents* (Chicago, 1906), I §§463-5.

60. Vercoutter, *op. cit.*, 355f. and espec. 361.

61. According to the Stele of Nesumontu (Vercoutter, *op. cit.*, 362). See also Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, 125f., 131.

62. Vercoutter, *op. cit.*, 365.

63. For details see J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt I*, 676f.

The practice of Egyptian monarchs offering gifts to Asiatic chiefs in return for the favour of their co-operation as allies may have already been established fully before Sesostri's time, for there is evidence from as far away as Ugarit on the coast of Upper Levant, consisting of amulets and pearls bearing the cartouche of his name (see further below). According to J. Vercoutter (*op. cit.* 367) this practice was begun by this monarch.

By the end of his reign Egypt had control over Lower Nubia; the Libyans were no longer a menace on the western frontier; mutually good relations existed between Egypt and the *settled* people of the Levant. Egypt was strong. Her external operations were expansive and conducted by diplomacy, not by armed might. Sesostri's successor Ammenemes II (1929-1895) likewise was able to execute his foreign commercial interests by diplomacy. His name or that of members of his family appears on a sphinx at Qatna in Upper Levant and a statue at Ugarit. The "Treasure of Tod", a temple in southern Egypt, provides evidence of his activities in the Levant, where he obtained goods which were used as gifts there for his gods.

With Ammenemes II began a true expansion of Egyptian acquisition of resources; his was a time when it had become more and more essential for Egypt to maintain a regular supply of certain imports, thus to provide for the economic situation created by new royal, noble and middle-class consumer demands. This reign was characterised by a deliberate foreign policy of expansion beyond Sinai and well up into the Levant, Egypt's "natural empire". Unfortunately we know little by way of firm evidence about this new expansion as far as its *modus operandi* is concerned. Campaigns by Sesostri III (1878-43) are known, but where precisely they were directed and with what exact motivation is a moot problem. In the reign of this king, a campaign into the north took place, reaching as far as Sekmen (almost certainly the biblical Shechem) in the Lower Levant (Central Palestine).⁶⁴ There is no lack of evidence for an Egyptian 'presence' farther north at this period, since a large number of Dyn 12 objects were found in the region by Woolley.⁶⁵

There is no justification for the suggestion that there was some concerted effort on the part of the early monarchs of the Middle Kingdom to destroy the Asiatics (the Amu) in the Lower

64. Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, 132.

65. G. Posener, *Littérature et politique dans l'Égypte de la XIIIe dynastie* (Paris, 1956), 106-7. For the settled political situation in Sinai itself at this time see Gardiner *et al.*, *op. cit.*, II, 1-21.

Levant at large.⁶⁶ Indeed, the picture we have is rather one of tolerance towards the *settled* Semites at least. Evidence that Asiatics (proto-Canaanites and, possibly, proto-Arabs?) did not adopt a hostile attitude towards Egypt in any ethnic or corporate sense comes from several sources; e.g., Asiatics took part in the working of the Egyptian turquoise mines in Sinai, not as prisoners but as freemen.⁶⁷

Despite this picture of mutually good Egypto-Levantine relations, it remains almost certain that some of the Dyn. 12 records of Asiatics being severely dealt with remind us of the ever-present, *unsettled* nomads and semi-nomads who constantly posed a threat to Egypt's trading communications, as well as their continual tendency to infiltrate through the Sinai Gate in unruly groups—as distinct from the *pastoral* Semites who were often granted permission to settle, presumably in small numbers, in the Delta area.⁶⁸

Dyn. 12, furthermore, represents a time when, in political terms, the Egyptian influence in the Levant as a whole was already considerable. An Egyptian physical presence north of Sinai, as far as Byblos and even further north, is beyond doubt.⁶⁹ The evidence starts as early as the long reign of the enterprising Sesostris I, and it consists of a record (stela) of royal messengers travelling 'in every land' without apparently suffering any molestation.⁷⁰ Except perhaps for the Amu who apparently did not have any close kinship with the *settled* population of Amorites, but were in all probability nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes or clans whose activities were always peripheral to the city-states, as we shall observe below in reference to Byblos city and the people 'around Byblos'.⁷¹

66. *Ibid.*, 19. Vercoutter (*op. cit.*, 366) quotes J. Cerny (1955): 'The inscriptions (of the Twelfth Dynasty) contain not even one allusion to enemies, quite the contrary, the Asiatics of Sinai and of the adjacent regions often, if not regularly, accompany the Egyptian expeditions'.

67. F. L. Griffith, "Fragments of Old Egyptian Stories" in *B. Soc. Bib. Arch.* 14 (1892), 451f. It is to be noted that such stories reflect a milieu in which, for centuries at a span, pastoral Semites were allowed to settle (to Egypt's economic advantage) in the Delta. Given an early dating for the Hebrew Patriarchs, the period under discussion is not far removed in time from them.

68. See n. 67.

69. A. Rowe, "Three New Stelae from the South-Eastern Desert" in *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 39 (1939), 187-94. See further Gardiner *et al.*, *The Inscriptions of Sinai*, Pt. 1, plate 18, No. 54: Pt. 2, 80.

70. Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, 131-2, ref. the impossibility of domination of the area by a single ruler.

71. See n. 101.

The energetic diplomatic activity characteristic of the time⁷² is noted in the Story of Sinuhe:⁷³

'One foreign country gave me to another. I set off for Byblos and approached Qedem⁷⁴ and spent a year and a half there . . . the ruler of Upper Retenu⁷⁵ . . . said to me, "Thou wilt do well with me and thou wilt hear the speech of Egypt." He said this, for he . . . had heard of my wisdom, and the people of Egypt who were there with him had borne witness for me.'⁷⁶

This was a time of accepted diplomatic procedures (cf. the full development as revealed in the Amarna Correspondence),⁷⁷ when royal servants travelled from court to court, when gifts were exchanged between courts, and when court intrigues were becoming commonplace—witness the New Kingdom period, as petty princes and city governors vied with one another for the favours of mighty Egypt. Settlements of Egyptian diplomats in the Levant existed in Sesostris' time.⁷⁸

There can be no doubt that Egypt had never been so interested and involved in 'Retenu'. The Story of Sinuhe is but one source of information, providing as it does our first well-documented material for the Levant at this time. Sinuhe describes, surprisingly fully, the ecology of Upper Retenu in some detail. We learn much also of the bedouin way of life, confirming what we know from later Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources. G. Posener (*et al*) assesses the Sinuhe description of the inhabitants as 'nomads or semi-nomads in the process of settling in a region already partly cultivated'.⁷⁹

72. G. Posener *et al.* in *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 540, draw attention to the activity of royal messengers and diplomats as revealed by the Mari and Amarna Correspondence (of a later time).

73. A. M. Blackman, *Middle Egyptian Stories* (Brussels, 1932), 24. See also Pritchard *op. cit.*, 18-22 for a translation of the Story of Sinuhe (by J. A. Wilson: see also the prefixed bibliography there).

74. Normally = 'east', but the specification, if any, is not clear.

75. Presumably S. Syria/Lebanon. Wilson, however, takes this to refer to 'Highland country, probably including northern Palestine, southern and central Syria'. See his n. 12 (p. 19, col. 1) for an explanation.

76. *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 538. For other sources see, e.g. G. Posener, "Les richesses inconnues de la littérature égyptienne" in *Revue d'Égyptologie* 6 (1951), 27-48, espec. 30. W. K. Simpson, "Papyrus Lythgoe: a Fragment of a Literary Text of the Middle Kingdom from El-Lisht" in *Jour. Egypt. Arch.* 46 (1960), 65-70 (plates 15-15A).

77. For the Amarna Texts see J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna Tafeln* (Leipzig, 1951), supplement in 1970 by A. F. Rainey, *El-Amarna Tablets*, 359-379 (*Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 8).

78. Posener, *op. cit.*, 106-114. At Ugarit a collar with Sesostris' cartouche was found: C. F. A. Schaeffer, *Ugaritica I* (Paris, 1939), 20.

79. *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 554.

Intensive Egyptian interests in the Levant are further highlighted in the Execration Texts.⁸⁰ Here we are confronted with the undeniable fact that at this time the Egyptians were very familiar with political topography of the whole length of the region which in turn proves to what extent Egyptian activity had increased since the reign of Ammenemes I (1991-62). The period from the start of his reign to the end of Sesostri's I's may be reckoned as about sixty-three years,⁸¹ long enough for such intimate knowledge of the area to have been acquired by a real presence there.

There is the vexed question whether this dynasty was a period of empire. Did Egypt *in effect* govern the Levant, at least in parts?⁸² In view of the patchy picture painted in the Execration Texts—defined tribal areas ruled by princes, areas occupied by several tribes under one ruler who had at his disposal an army and Egyptians at his court, and city-state rulers claiming sovereignty over other rulers—we must assume for the time a pre-Amorite-settlement political patchwork which was to become less and less multi-coloured as Amorite power solidified and eventually became the only effective native political power in the Levant, aside from possible political control in places by Egypt, especially in the south. The problem is further complicated by our lack of information on the emergence of the sub-Amorite Canaanites as a distinctive ethno-political unit.⁸³

It is believed that in some Levantine cities there were 'more or less permanent (Egyptian) missions',⁸⁴ for example at Ugarit and Megiddo. If so, then Egyptian influence was effective throughout most of the East Mediterranean coast and to some extent inland. In the time of Sesostri's III (*ca.* 1878-43) the Egyptians knew some twenty 'countries' and thirty princes.⁸⁵ These 'countries' represent an area from the Lower Levant (Palestine) as far north as the Eleutheros Valley between Byblos and Ugarit, an area which was to loom large in the military enterprises of Tuthmosis III in New Kingdom times. The Egyptian influence was by no means confined to the Mediterranean littoral, however, for some of the towns mentioned were inland. It is not clear to us why the Egyptian foreign office kept such a close surveillance on the internal political situation in Retenu, unless we may assume that

80. *CAH I*. Pt. 2, 505f., for reference to recent articles.

81. Cf. Manetho. The Turin Canon year lists are uncertain. See for particulars Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, 439.

82. See Gardiner, *op. cit.*, 131-2.

83. See further *CAH I*. Pt. 2, 556-7, and K. M. Kenyon, *Amorites and Canaanites* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1966).

84. *CAH I*. Pt. 2, 549.

85. Sethe, *op. cit.*, 43-58.

Middle Kingdom interests reflect a 'commercial empire' governed by diplomacy rather than by force of arms.

The reign of Sesostri III was a time when bureaucracy had come into its own in the great centres of power in the Near East, witness the administrative sophistication of the kings of Ur III and Old Babylonia and of Shamshi-Adad I and his sons of Assyria. In Sesostri's time the Egyptian provinces were governed by three departments of a centralised administration—the *waret* of the north, the *waret* of Middle Egypt and the *waret* of the south—under the control of a vizier. The rise of the middle-class (cf. again contemporary Mesopotamia), if not resulting from this centralised administration in the first instance (I prefer to see the rise of a middle-class in terms of the earlier growth of the power and independence of the nobility), may now be seen to be well under way, with considerable effects on consumer demand which are noted below.

For the reign of Sesostri III it may be said that the Levant 'had definitely come under Egyptian influence . . . (although) the principalities of Palestine were never actually incorporated into Egypt'⁸⁶ This statement, referring to the Lower Levant in particular, may be widened in its scope to include the whole of the Levant from Ugarit to Gaza. This was no empire in the usual sense. It was the political sway by a highly-developed and sophisticated country area a region that was not politically or economically homogeneous.

This is not the place to enumerate the many indications of an Asiatic presence in Egypt itself, a subject we have glanced at above. It is hardly to be denied that Semites had long since been immigrating into Egypt, a process that was to end with Asiatic (Hyksos) control of the Delta area in the early 18th century, a process closely comparable with the long infiltration of Amorites into Mesopotamia which ended in Amorite control of Babylonia—about the same time if we think in terms of centuries rather than years. The 18th century in the Near East generally was the century of Amorite consolidation of political power after centuries of movement towards the riverine cultural centres.

In this Dyn. 12 two-way traffic between Egypt and the Levant was well established in several senses. Semites were settled in parts of the Delta pasture lands and farther afield. Asiatic soldiers, perhaps mercenaries as is usually supposed, helped to swell the Egyptian army. Semites brought gifts to the royal court. Asiatic merchants and traders visited Egypt frequently. Many great houses belonging to the nobility had Asiatic servants (sometimes from

86. Hallo & Simpson, *op. cit.*, 247.

several parts of the Levant). People from the Levant went to Egypt to earn their living (somewhat after the manner of the modern Bantu who go to Johannesburg to earn their living for a season each year). There were Asiatic labour settlements or cantonments in Egypt.⁸⁷

It has long been usual to think of Egyptian influence in the Levant without regard for a Levantine (Asiatic) influence in Egypt. While the latter topic deserves a study to itself, a few observations are in place here. It is too easy to regard many of the wares which found their way into Egypt from the Levant as booty captured by predatory or punitive Egyptian army raiders. There was, no doubt, a percentage of booty among such wares, but consideration must be given by future writers on the subject to the real possibility that many of the wares (and livestock, as well as horses in later times) known to have entered Egypt at a given time were simply the outcome of trading activities or gifts of pastoral Semites seeking permission to say in Egypt.

The import of cattle in the reigns of Ammenemes II and Sesostris III (cf. the earlier cattle imports by way of plunder in Sesostris I's time) seem to have been substantial. If we are to assume that these came by way of booty, then from whom were they taken? The old enemy was the rough, uncultured nomad, the bedouin, rather than the pastoral, or even semi-pastoral Semite. Would the bedouin have been able to handle large numbers of cattle? No, we must look for another explanation for such cattle imports. It has to be allowed that such imports could represent something akin to 'tribute', in which case the 'givers' would have received something in return. Protection? If so, protection against whom? It seems to be very probable that the pastoral Semites would often have been under attack from the bedouin and that these would have welcomed Egyptian protection against their enemies.

There is also the possibility that such imports represent requisitions. In this case we would have to suppose that the Egyptian army imposed its will on pastoralists. Yet, this runs counter to what we know of Egypto-Levantine relations in Dyn. 12 in general. This explanation is hardly satisfactory, and we may therefore enquire whether my original proposal above is not much more likely, namely that cattle imports (e.g. from the Megiddo area) were in fact the result of trade of a local nature. In some

87. Some of these examples are found in the Story of Sinuhe. See also P. E. Newberry *et al.*, *Beni Hasan* (London, 1893-1900), Pt. 1, 69, 72 (and plates 28, 30, 31 38). W. Wreszinski, *Atlas zur altägyptischen Kulturgeschichte* (Leipzig, 1935), pt. 2, 6. N. M. Davies & A. H. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Paintings* (Chicago, 1936), I, plates 10-11. For other refs. see *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 541-4.

cases, on the other hand, they could have been gifts-for-favour to the Egyptian authorities by the pastoral Semites, those Semites precisely who sought a livelihood in the fertile Delta lands.

What is certain, regardless of the explanation, is that Egyptian interests in the Levant during Dyn. 12 resulted in a large influx of Semites, Asiatic cattle and a variety of manufactured goods.⁸⁸

We must be careful not to regard the Egyptian commercial boom of Dyn. 12 as due entirely to operations in the Levant. Egypt's awakening was reflected in broader foreign activities, for amongst the goods and wares received at this time were objects of Cretan origin as well.⁸⁹

The Egyptian 'presence' in the Levant at large is well attested by archaeological finds. Of the sites involved, Byblos is paramount.⁹⁰ Here a great variety of Egyptian objects have been found belonging to Dyn. 12 times, but there must remain some doubt in many instances whether particular objects were taken to Byblos as gifts or exchanges or 'bribes', or whether they were manufactured by Byblian craftsmen after Egyptian models.⁹¹ However, the thesis that Egyptian involvement in the Levant at this time was considerable is supported by the high level of Egyptian influences, commercial and political, which is revealed by the fact that Byblian princes used hieroglyphic writing when writing their names. Since they also styled themselves 'governor', using Egyptian terminology,⁹² we may safely assume that Egyptian influence, especially at Byblos, was substantial in political terms. The names of Dyn. 12 kings were incised in objects of precious materials and politico-cultic importance from the time of Sesostris I on⁹³ and including Ammenemes III⁹⁴ and Ammenemes IV.⁹⁵

88. See further *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 541-4.

89. E.g. cups and a silver pendant. These, however, may have been locally manufactured in Lebanon, perhaps in Byblos or even at Ugarit in Syria, where Aegean influence over a long period was significant. See further F. Bisson de la Roque *et al.*, *Le Trésor de Tôd* (Cairo, 1953), 21-35. H. J. Kantor, *The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium B.C.* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1947), 19-20.

90. For full relevant details see P. Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte*, and M. Dunand, *Fouilles de Byblos* (Paris, 1937-58), 2 vols. B. Porter & R. L. B. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings* (Oxford, 1927-60), III, 386-92.

91. W. S. Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (Harmondsworth, 1958), 113.

92. P. Montet, "Notes et documents", 174-7 and plates 99-100; 190 and plate 117. The use of cartouches by such princes is also attested: *ibid.* 165, 212, 277 & plate 97.

93. M. Dunand, *op. cit.*, II, 196-7 and plate 188 No. 8503. *CAH* II. II, §II. Porter & Moss, *op. cit.*, II, 369-96.

94. M. Chéhab, "Un tre sor d'orfevrerie syro-égyptien" in *Bull. du Musée de Beyrouth* (1937), I, 7-8 and plate No. 1.

95. Montet, *op. cit.*, 157-9 and plates 88, 90.

Another indication of undeniably Egyptian cultural-commercial influence was the presence in Byblos of Egyptian sphinxes at a Canaanite temple.⁹⁶

Lest we forget that Byblos was not the only city where Egyptian influence to such a degree was established, it should be remembered that most of the Levant also shared it—Alalakh in the far north,⁹⁷ and Shechem, Lachish, Gerar and Beisan in the south.⁹⁸

Posener, Bottéro and Kenyon in CAH⁹⁹ draw attention to the fact that in the Execration Texts¹⁰⁰ there are some omissions which may be significant for the picture of Egyptian political sway in the Levant as a whole. For example, the princes of Byblos are not mentioned, though 'the people of the Byblos region are regarded as potential enemies' (= the Amu?).¹⁰¹ There is no mention of Megiddo, Ugarit or Qatna—which 'are precisely the towns in which . . . the presence of Egyptians made itself especially strongly felt'.¹⁰² They pose the question whether these are omitted from the Texts because they were not a cause of anxiety to Egypt. Bearing in mind that the Egyptian government had a detailed knowledge of Levantine political topography, it is all the more problematic that the Texts are so selective. Posener *et al.* continue by referring to the government functionaries who were placed in *residential* (my italics) positions as representatives of their government. Evidence is forthcoming from the statues of highly-placed Egyptian officials in various places, especially Ugarit and Megiddo (strongly fortified towns!). At the latter 'seals bearing titles show that officials of the pharaohs (sic) were present and functioning at the place where the objects were found. Egyptians were well established in Sinai; they occupied a high position at Byblos'¹⁰³ Finally, 'from these facts there emerges the impression of domination by the pharaohs (sic) uneven and interrupted, no doubt, but on the whole vigorous. In view of this progressive increase in our knowledge, we shall err less if we exaggerate

96. Porter & Moss, *op. cit.*, VII, 393. For a sphinx and pectoral of Ammenemes IV see *ibid.*, 384-5, and U. Schweitzer, *Löwe und Sphinx im alten Ägypten* (Glückstadt, 1948), 44 and plate 10.8.

97. Porter & Moss, *op. cit.*, VII, 395.

98. Shechem: *ibid.* 375; Lachish: *ibid.* 372; Gerar: *ibid.* 370; Beisan: *ibid.* 379.

99. I. Pt. 2, 845-50.

100. These were inscribed potsherds found in Upper Egypt and in Mirgissa. The Texts were to be broken by smashing a magical act in execration of the Asiatics listed.

101. CAH I. Pt. 2, 548.

102. *idem.*

103. Porter & Moss, *Nubia, the Deserts, and Outside Egypt* (Oxford, 1951), 394.

than if we minimize the hold the Twelfth Dynasty had over Syria and Palestine,¹⁰⁴ Good relations with Asiatics at least are implied by an Egyptian Beni Hasan nomarch in Sesostris II's time (1897-78) entertaining a bedouin chief.¹⁰⁵ But are we to believe that this nomarch entertained a *bedouin* chief, rather than a pastoral 'sheikh'?

On the other hand, too much can be made of the odd, single object found at, for example, the Megiddo excavations.¹⁰⁶ More significant by far is the presence at Ugarit of three stelae depicting local deities influenced by Egyptian religion.¹⁰⁷ This topic cannot be taken up here, since it represents merely a by-product, interesting though it is, of Egyptian involvement in the life of the Upper Levant and a restricted area at that. What is of interest is the undoubted fact that such eclecticism could not develop overnight and that such Egyptian influence at Ugarit (like that of the Hurrians) in the religious field far outweighs Mesopotamian influence of the same period. In other words, the Egyptian presence in the Levant made itself increasingly deeply felt. Indications of this are numerous. For example, there are gifts from Upper Levantine rulers;¹⁰⁸ at Ugarit was found a statuette of a daughter of Ammenemes II and a fragment of a figure of his vizier.¹⁰⁹

Sesostris III and Ammenemes III (ca. 1842-1797) brought the level of Egyptian culture and economy to greater heights than ever before. Matching the internal consolidation and expansion of Egypt's national wealth at this time were a number of foreign activities, including extensive operations at the Sinai mines.¹¹⁰ These operations may have been conducted in the face of hostility from desert nomads, as indicated by the depiction of Ammenemes III, on a pectoral from Dahshur, smiting bedouin of Sinai and

104. *CAH* I. Pt. 2, 549-50.

105. *CAH*, *ibid.*, 541.

106. Posener *et al.*, *ibid.* 550, ref. the find of a 'magical wand of ivory' of the period, 'with a hieroglyphic formula bearing the name of a Palestinian woman'.

107. C. F. A. Schaeffer, *Ugaritica* II (Paris, 1949), 89-95 and plate 22. For other instances of 'borrowing' from the Egyptian pantheon see A. Dessene, *Le Sphinx, étude iconographique, I Des origines à la fin du second millénaire* (Paris, 1957), 24-34. S. Smith, *Alalakh and Chronology* (London, 1940), 13. L. Woolley, *Alalakh* (Oxford, 1955), plate 60 No. 12B.

108. R. Bisson de la Roque, *op. cit.*, relevant plates J. Vandier, "À propos d'un dépôt de provenance asiatique trouvé à Tôd" in *Syria* 18 (1937), 174-82 and plates 28-9.

109. Porter & Moss, *Lower and Middle Egypt and Upper Egypt* (Oxford, 1934-37), IV, 145-6.

110. W. M. F. Petrie, *Researches in Sinu* (New York, 1906) *passim*.

the Lower Levant (Palestine).¹¹¹ Ammenemes in particular seems to have been influential in the Levant, for as far apart as Byblos and the Third Cataract (at Kerma) his name was sufficiently renowned to occur in monuments over a wide area. In the Sinai mining area Ammenemes III's reign was a time of considerable activity, as is seen from the fact that some fifty-nine inscriptions of his name have been found there.¹¹²

Until the time of the New Kingdom, Egypt's 'authority' in the Levant was never surpassed after Ammenemes' death in 1797. Egypt's steady decline from that time on was soon to be matched by a corresponding decline in Mesopotamia. In Egypt the era of the Asiatic overlord, the Hyksos, and in Assyria the Hurrians—a time of much reduced material and cultural advancement in the Near East—was soon to be at hand, and it was Egypt of the great Near Eastern native powers that would first build an empire, an empire for which preparation had been well and truly made in the Middle Kingdom.

To attempt to answer the question whether such influence in the Levant as Egypt had was basically political or commercial (with diplomatic overtones), one would do well to turn to a more basic question. What was the fundamental motivation for Egypt's interest in the area (and especially the Lebanon)? for the period of the Old Kingdom we may agree with Sir Alan Gardiner (*Egypt of the Pharaohs*, 89) that 'all foreign ventures of the Old Kingdom appear to have been utilitarian in aim—journeys to procure to the sovereign the materials wherewith to sate his passion for building, to enhance the luxury of his Court, and to meet the requirements of the deities whom he worshipped.' However, for the period of the Middle Kingdom (and to a small extent for the Old Kingdom) we may state that the motivation was first and foremost commercial¹¹³ and, to some degree, economic. The rising standards of the Egyptian nobility, due mainly to the equalisation of wealth and the need for the monarch to maintain the support of the great noble houses, increasingly forced Egyptian merchants, sometimes with the help of armed force against predatory nomads, in the case of state-controlled commercial

111. J. de Morgan, *Fouilles à Dahchour, Mars-Juin 1894 and en 1894-1895* (Vienna, 1895), I, 64 (I), plates 20-21.

112. J. Vercoutter, *op. cit.*, 378.

113. Sumer (later Sumer & Akkad), Babylonia and Assyria had a real need to obtain raw materials, just as Egypt had about the same time and for similar cultural as well as economic reasons. Sumer/Babylonia had no stone in her fertile, alluvial soil. Her lack made her history!

enterprises, to extend their activities in the Levant. Since the Lower Levant (Palestine) offered little, comparatively speaking, that was of value to them and much of what entered Egypt from that area was little more than some booty, some gifts, requisitions, while the Upper Levant offered precisely what her expanding economy required, Egypt obviously *needed* the Upper Levant, and consequently, uninterrupted free passage through the Lower Levant. Diplomatic and political pressures on the former would have been necessary, including cultural exchanges, trade agreements, court exchanges, and so on. As regards the Lower Levant, which had little to attract Egypt, her army from time to time had to keep the roads clear of nomads in order to ensure rapid transit of goods to and from the Upper Levant.

In addition to the rising consumer demand from the great houses of Egypt during the Middle Kingdom period, there was, as elsewhere in the Near East, a rising demand from the new middle-class who benefited increasingly from state-operated mercantile projects. In any case, the demands of one class in society are inevitably reflected in the next class lower in the social scale. Just as the nobility emulated the sovereign, so the middle-class emulated the nobility.

We must, I think, consider the problem of the nature and extent of Egyptian involvement and influence in the Upper Levant in this light. Obviously a more detailed examination of the matter is needed, that we may achieve a more accurate assessment of the Egyptian objects found at various sites in the area. Certainly Dyn. 12 was the time when Egyptian activity in the area was at its greatest, with the exception of the New Kingdom period to come, but we must see a long, continual, if not continuous, growth of the involvement stemming back into Old Kingdom times. Consider, too, how far afield Egyptian influence was felt under the Middle Kingdom monarchs. Apart from Upper Nubia, examples of Egyptian manufactures have been found as far apart as the Aegean shores, presumably having reached there from Levantine ports, and Crete, as well as throughout the length and breadth of the East Mediterranean littoral.

That Dyn. 12 should represent the summit of such commercial activity—without military conquest as in the case of Dyn. 18—may be seen in another light. The age of internationalism had begun. Assyria and Babylonia had started to look beyond their own frontiers. The story told by the respective royal inscriptions

114. The Mari texts are transliterated and translated in *Archives royales de Mari* (Paris, 1950-64), I-XV. For historical significance see *CAH* II. I, §II and II. V, §II.

and by the Mari Correspondence¹¹⁴ is one of nascent internationalism. Shamshi-Adad I of Assyria (1814-1782) and Hammurabi of Babylonia (1792-50) were in close and regular correspondence with other countries or city-states. It was not long before the Age of International Contest was in full swing, an age when Hittites, Mitanni-Hurrians, Egyptians, Assyrians and Baylonians exchanged letters, provided ambassadors in each other's courts, engaged in high international diplomacy, an age when royal courts exchanged gifts on a lavish, but agreed scale.

The beginning of the Near Eastern international age, the first international age in history, in the 19th-18th centuries was the age of the Twelfth Dynasty in Egypt. Egypt had not been truly expansionist in policy till then, but now we see her stirring from her regionalism and 'parochialism' and becoming part of the wider international community. It is within this grander setting, I suggest, that we must assess and evaluate the interests, involvements and activities of Egypt in the Levant (and elsewhere). In the Age of International Contest, when Dyn. 18 and the New Kingdom/Empire were at their height, the Egyptian monarchs were not limited to the acquisition of materials for personal aggrandisement as in older times; they shared with the monarchs of Khatti and Mitanni, their 'brothers' in the diplomatic correspondence (Amarna), a *need* for control of the Levant. The story of this contest goes beyond the period of our interest here, but we may see that *need* and that international contest in the light of developments in Egypt throughout the periods leading up to the end of Dyn. 12 and the Middle Kingdom. Egypt ceased to be able to 'breathe' without the Levant. The latter was her vital appendage. At first commercially, then diplomatically, and in the end by military conquest, Egypt kept her grip on that coveted land area.

Consideration must also be given to the matter of the long build-up of local Asiatic (Amorite) power-centres in Egypt, which resulted in Semitic political control first at Avaris by *ca.* 1720. This matter is not so irrelevant in this connection as it may seem. That infiltration and settlement of these Asiatic pastoralists should have reached such dimensions during the 18th century and that Egyptians in their turn should have had the growing influence they did *in the same period* in the Levant, bespeaks a general Egypto-Semitic relationship of mutual tolerance, despite occasional—indeed comparatively infrequent—fighting between Egyptian troops and the restless nomads or semi-nomads in the Sinai-Lower Levant area.

Why should there have been such a measure of tolerance on both sides, unless it was that relations between the two were mutually beneficial? We have noted the nature of Egyptian interests,

at first purely commercial and eventually political. What of the indigenous Semites of the Levant? If we keep before us the fact that the Levant during this period was made up, ethnically and politically, of a great number of small city-states, independent towns, fixed tribal areas (leaving out of consideration the peripheral desert and mountainous regions and the roaming Amu), no one in itself possessed of great political influence or military strength, we can see the effects on these somewhat disparate units of a presence among them of sophisticated diplomatics, emissaries of great kings, and merchants and trade missions over a lengthy time-span. A certain cultural, diplomatic and economic-commercial, and in a limited sense political, homogeneity might well have come into being at a time when constant inter-city and inter-state warfare would have been the only alternative.

Egypt in effect played a pacifying role, no doubt for practical reasons, just as Sumer too was able to exercise her culturising influence over the immigrant western Semites who for centuries had been finding their way down the Euphrates into her territory, and over also the eastern Elamites whose interests in the great alluvial Mesopotamian plain had long been acquisitive, though not on a national scale. Egypt and Sumer had much in common. Both were highly civilised, agriculture-based, riverine countries which depended on the friendship, or at least tolerance of their eastern neighbours. Neither country could advance culturally or economically on its own—each needed the raw materials that could only be obtained beyond its own frontiers. Military force, put into operation time and time again against an unco-operative neighbour, would have been extremely costly, and many an empire in history has lost its grip precisely because its resources were over-extended by military campaigns. Unlike Assyria, whose geographical situation placed her constantly under pressure and threat of aggression from rough, mountain neighbours, Egypt and Sumer had a levelling, almost a tranquillising effect and pacifying influence on their neighbours to the east and north-east.

So Amorites were able to filter through into Egypt and settle there. They did so for their pastoral living. So Egyptians found their way into the Levant and settled there. They did so for their commercial living. This was, in any case, the beginning of an international age in the Near East. Amorites were already established in Mesopotamia; Elamites and people to the east of them had long found a place in Mesopotamian society because they had skills that were needed. Hurrians had already settled in small numbers north of the Fertile Crescent. The political effects of

these slow ethnic movements were to be felt throughout the Age of International Contest. For the present, the movements were peaceful enough on the whole; trade flourished and international exchanges increased. These exchanges were most marked in the fields of trade and diplomacy, and in general culture and religion. The Egyptian Middle Kingdom was a period when the men of the Nile looked beyond their narrow green carpet of god-given fertility to the variegated world beyond, a world that offered a new dimension of living and a veritable host of opportunities. Egypt benefited from her foreign enterprises, and the foreign countries benefited from Egypt's sophistication. This is true internationalism without war.