Abstract and Keywords

This chapter provides an overview of possible types of cultural contact between Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean and of the available sources, both archaeological and textual, and their interpretational values and problems. The focus is on the Early and Middle Bronze Ages, corresponding to the Early Dynastic period, the Old Kingdom, the First Intermediate Period, the Middle Kingdom, and the Second Intermediate Period in Egypt. Using sources that have recently come to light, especially pottery, the article stresses the contextual information of such finds and considers changes in paradigms of interpretation. Analyzing and interpreting imported and “imitation” wares and objects is a relatively new and very difficult field, one that has initiated a re-evaluation of both textual and archaeological evidence.

Keywords: trade relations, Aegean, gift exchange, cultural contact, archaeological context, pottery, imitations, Middle Kingdom, Old Kingdom, Bronze Age

Introduction

For a considerable period of time, scholarship often maintained that Egypt—as a monolithic and “pure”\(^1\) culture—did not owe many of its achievements to influences from other cultures except, perhaps, for raw materials.\(^2\) This viewpoint has lingered because Egyptian culture retains a peculiar recognition value in the eyes of the observer, more so than contemporaneous cultures in the eastern Mediterranean.\(^3\) Thus, contacts with other cultures and influences derived from such contacts were underestimated in the past because not enough credit was given to the fact that any nonlocal contact must invariably and mutually change both interacting parties. It is, of course, debateable to what extent such changes can be perceived in material culture because individual choice also plays a role in accepting or rejecting external influences.
More recent research demonstrates that, from earliest times, the Egyptian Nile Delta and the Nile Valley had some sort of contact with southern Palestine and even Mesopotamia. The presence of uncontexted singular objects such as the “Gebel el-Araq” knife, which combines Egyptian and Near Eastern elements, seems to indicate such contacts, but the lack of archaeological context means there is a lack of connective data. Thus, overly complex interpretations of such objects may not reflect ancient realities. It is also important to stress that the nature of the source material must be borne in mind: the earlier the period, the smaller the variety of extant source types and, in all likelihood, the less densely distributed the evidence available for interpretation. This becomes especially evident in considering the diachronic development of Egyptian relations with the surrounding world.

For earlier periods, it remains difficult to describe the nature of these relations and how they were conducted—directly or indirectly—solely from finds of material culture. Objects made from raw materials not naturally occurring in Egypt or in the neighboring areas (e.g., cedar wood, obsidian, lapis lazuli) attest to contacts that must have existed, but the organizational framework and scale of such contacts remain largely unknown. For later periods, source types and contextual information increase and more material is preserved, including easily portable items, such as pottery or seals, which could be transported by many different agents. In Egypt, inscriptions in tombs or temples, or from royal decrees, offer another source of evidence for cross-cultural contact, as do administrative documents and literary compositions. Funerary stelae made for individuals with administrative titles and autobiographical texts sometimes bear records of travel to other parts of the world, often recounting the deceased’s great deeds, for which he had been amply rewarded. The difficulty lies in the reconciliation and contextualization of these different source types so that they can be interpreted to mutual benefit without too uncritical usage of written sources.

It is also important not to project backward in time reconstructions of events informed by better-documented periods, with more varied types of source material because it is by no means possible to be sure whether the state of affairs attested later indeed reflects the earlier periods as well. This will hold true even if the archaeological record in both periods may look very similar.

Bearing these caveats in mind, this chapter highlights the variety of source types, both archaeological and textual, that can be used to explore the nature and extent of contacts between Egypt and the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age. Although a thorough treatment of all the known sources would go well beyond the scope of this chapter, the available material offers a variety of interpretations and numerous avenues for further research. After discussing the geographic context of Egyptian and Mediterranean contacts, the chapter considers models for understanding cross-cultural contact and exchange networks in archaeology. This is followed by a chronological overview of evidence from the region, with a particular emphasis on the Early and Middle Bronze Ages.
Egypt and the Mediterranean: Geographies of Contact

In considering Egypt and her relations to the Mediterranean, a distinction in approach may be made: her direct neighbors—Libya, Palestine, and coastal Syria—could be reached overland without the necessity to build and master seagoing ships. These areas are in a similar league to Nubia, which is well connected via land routes but also by means of river boats. Interestingly, overland activities in the northern Sinai area and the southern Levant are not attested for all periods (see later discussion), and finding out about the possible reasons for it provides an area of further research.

Whether contacts to places further afield, such as central Africa, northern Syria, and further inland toward Mesopotamia as well as to the Aegean, Cyprus, and Anatolia, were conducted directly or via intermediaries remains unclear for most of the Bronze Age. A number of foreign sites abroad seems to have had a special relationship to Egypt from very early in their history, and these relationships lasted for long periods. Byblos in particular stood in close contacts with Egypt from the Old Kingdom onward. In the Middle Kingdom, the rulers of Byblos were referred to by means of Egyptian administrative titles. The site remained important as part of the political network of the Late Bronze Age (Amarna correspondence). “Hathor, mistress of Byblos” appears in texts, and, in the New Kingdom, a temple was erected for her.

The eastern part of the Mediterranean was particularly favorable to the formation of maritime contacts due to the combinations of winds, currents, and general topography. Without those preconditions, the relations between those areas would not have developed in the way they did. They play a major role, which cannot be stressed enough.

Relations with Crete and the Greek mainland should probably be seen quite differently because the access and possible direct influence by ship or via intermediaries was probably not as impressive and threatening as an overland campaign with thousands of soldiers. For the Old Kingdom, there is no proof for direct contact between Egypt and Crete. When maritime activity by means of seagoing vessels in the Levant and along the coast began is also not very clear, but it is assumed to have started already in the Early Bronze Age, and it is indirectly indicated in the 4th Dynasty on the Palermo Stone. However, a maritime military expedition to the southern Levant is attested by Weni in the reign of Pepy I of the 6th Dynasty. In addition, due to the fact that the toponyms of the Aegean islands are not identified beyond dispute, textual references remain often ambiguous.

Interestingly, Cyprus, contrary to the modern view, belonged to “Asia” (Setjet) at least in the Middle Kingdom, according to the Memphite inscription of Amenemhet II if, indeed, the identification of I3sy with Alashia is correct. Thus, imported archaeological material
found in these respective places affords additional evidence for interaction of some kind, but it remains difficult to provide unequivocal proof for direct contact or clarification of the circumstances of its arrival.\textsuperscript{21}
Contacts with Foreign Countries According to the Egyptian Worldview

From very early on, the difference between Egypt—the local—and everything else (i.e., nonlocal) appears in texts (esp. late Old Kingdom). Those "outside" were given various names, such as "Asiatic," "Nubian," or "Libyan" and the like, and phenotypical differences between Egyptians and those "others" started to be shown with changing consistency and canon in pictorial evidence.\(^{22}\) Not only does this contrasting juxtaposition exist, but the pharaoh is in control of it and the sun god will destroy foreign countries for him, if they rebel against his rule.\(^ {23}\)

Over time, foreigners were relegated from initially equal status to Egyptians to, in a much later period, impure people per se. At first, everybody, irrelevant of which descent, rebelling against a natural order that placed the Egyptian pharaoh at the top was considered an impure outlaw, as becomes clear from the inclusion of Upper and Lower Egyptians and oasis dwellers in the execration texts\(^ {24}\) and in the "peoples of the nine bows,"\(^ {25}\) who were Egypt’s topical enemies. These peoples were depicted as bows on the underside of pharaoh's sandals on foot stools or under the feet of his seated statues (cf. the statue base of king Djoser of the 3rd Dynasty\(^ {26}\)), thus affixing them into submission.\(^ {27}\) Written lists of these peoples first appear in the 18th Dynasty in private tombs at Thebes.\(^ {28}\)

The power of the ruler is also symbolized since the pre-dynastic period by the icon of the "smiting of the enemies/prisoners" (Hierakonpolis tomb 100) that was used until the Roman period. In the beginning of Egyptian history, the identity and visual appearance of the enemy was not very specific and canonically not fixed but had to be added as text.\(^ {29}\) As late as the early Middle Kingdom, one instance from Gebelein is known in which an Egyptian is smitten by the king, with an Asiatic and a Libyan prisoner waiting their turn.\(^ {30}\)

In the Late Bronze Age, these enemies were frequently shown as Asiatics.\(^ {31}\) There seems to be a (conceptual? geographical?) difference between the “usual suspects”—“vile” Nubians\(^ {32}\) and Asiatics\(^ {33}\)—and those who are shown less frequently, namely the Libyans, the “people from the islands in the middle of the great green” (the Keftiu),\(^ {34}\) and the hau-nebut, generally interpreted as Aegeans. This term means literally “those who are beyond the baskets,” but Delta dwellers might be referred to.\(^ {35}\) The rarity of depictions of Aegeans may well be connected to a different status as “international players” rather than vassals,\(^ {36}\) thus corroborating the difference between those groups being made in the Egyptian worldview. But they might perhaps not be part of the topical “arch enemies” in the “smiting of the enemy” scenes\(^ {37}\) because the evidence for a major war with people of presumably Aegean origin (the Sea Peoples battle of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu) came relatively late in Egyptian history, when this icon was already “fossilized.”

PRINTED FROM OXFORD HANDBOOKS ONLINE (www.oxfordhandbooks.com). © Oxford University Press, 2018. All Rights Reserved. Under the terms of the licence agreement, an individual user may print out a PDF of a single chapter of a title in Oxford Handbooks Online for personal use (for details see Privacy Policy and Legal Notice).

date: 04 December 2018
However, it has to be borne in mind that there was in all probability a difference in conduct between the “topical” foreigners as shown smitten on monuments and those met in real life and with whom trade or diplomatic relations were conducted.\textsuperscript{38}

The Archaeology of Cultural Contact: Theoretical Models

In principle, two interaction models are relevant: peer polity and core-periphery relations.\textsuperscript{39} The difference lies in the degree of autonomy and spatial distance of socio-political groups and whether the “power balance” between groups is symmetrical or not. These categories can be further subdivided, but here only those that may be recognized in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Bronze Age will be mentioned.

Notably to the first category belong warfare (institutionalized competition), ceremonial exchange of valuables (diplomatic gifts, diplomatic marriage), and trade exchange of various products and raw materials in a symmetrical power relationship (mutual exchange of equal value).

Among core-periphery models, colonialism, imperialism, and trade diaspora can be named, and some interpretations of Egyptian and Mediterranean archaeology use these concepts. Here, trade exchange of products and raw materials in an asymmetrical power relationship (exploitation of resources without compensation of equal value) should be mentioned, as well as some expeditions to obtain raw materials.

A few examples of such contacts include the Memphite inscription of Amenemhet II recounting military campaigns with prisoners of war brought back to Egypt as well as commercial relationships to the Levant in the 12th Dynasty,\textsuperscript{40} whereas papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446 gives lists of Egyptian and foreign workers (Hm-unfree men, women, and children or “servants”) of an elite household.\textsuperscript{41} The stela of Amenemhet Nebwy from the 12th Dynasty and the inscription of Ahmose son of Ibana (18th Dynasty) relate how they came to “possess” several Asiatic persons as rewards for good service in military campaigns.\textsuperscript{42} Further contacts are exemplified by the tomb of the foreign wives of Thutmose III (see later discussion: increasing complexity in the late Bronze Age), frequent archaeological finds of imported pottery and cylinder seals, and the adoption of foreign art motifs and technology.

The Archaeology of Cultural Contact: Material Evidence
Egypt and the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age: The Archaeological Evidence

For Egyptian and Mediterranean prehistory, an interpretational dependence on material culture as sole tokens of contact and interaction is inevitable. Accordingly, the exact nature of such contacts remains unclear, and possible reconstructions vary widely. Often trade (exchange?) of some kind is presumed under more or less complex circumstances, but military conquest, colonization, and symbolic organization also qualify.43

In considering such interaction, two main scenarios are most frequently discussed,44 whereas two more possibilities are more rarely noted. In principle, these scenarios keep their validity throughout history and are not necessarily restricted to pottery (including, e.g., chipped stone tools, palettes, stone vessels, metal tools, weapons, textiles, building technology and lay-out of buildings,45 building materials, etc.). They could also be applied on an inner Egyptian scale (especially during prehistoric and Early Dynastic periods; e.g., Upper Egyptian pottery that appears on large scale in Lower Egypt46) as well as in other regions and periods of the world.47 Due to the abundance of ceramic material, developments become perhaps most explicit in this object class. Because pottery is so well represented in archaeological contexts in Egypt and the Levant and provides a finer relative chronology than other object types, examples were mainly chosen from these areas:

1. Pottery made from imported materials (i.e., nonlocal fabrics; e.g. either from Egypt into the Levant, or from the Levant into Egypt); usually a question of quantity in the archaeological record supported by scientific data (petrography, etc.).
2. "Foreign" pottery types known from Egypt or the Levant, respectively, with nonlocal shapes and nonlocal manufacturing technology, but made in local fabrics with sophisticated choices of raw material; exactitude of “imitation” or “copy” may vary; transfer of technological knowledge; possible time lag between absorption of influence and use of it.48
3. Pottery consisting of a mixture of Egyptian and Levantine traits (shape/technology); not exactly like one or the other.
4. Pottery using single elements derived from other spheres, in which it is difficult to isolate the reason for such a borrowing and subsequent inclusion into the local repertoire.

Scenario 1 indicates contact between the Levant/Egypt or other places, not for the pottery’s sake but for its contents, especially where storage vessels or other vessels of closed shapes are concerned. This is certainly also true of stone vessels, and, in respect to the raw material, closed shapes would have contained commodities, whereas open shapes would be most probably traded for their own sake. Whether such contact was direct or indirect depends on more contextual information. Somewhat too automatically, it is presumed that goods coming from the Levant signify trade exchange (resins, oils, wine49), whereas Egyptian vessels found in the southern Levant are taken to constitute provisions from Egypt to trading outposts or military installations. Taking this consideration further, these goods might also stand for exchange value.50 In general, it remains difficult to specify what exactly was traded (e.g., fatty animal/plant substances as
detected from residue analyses in vessels\(^5^1\) and how exchange values were estimated, especially in early periods. Another difficulty is that exchanged items may not be immediately obvious as commodities to our modern perception.

Scenarios 2 and 3 are more difficult to explain from archaeology and material culture alone because a multitude of possibilities is available. More thorough studies of this phenomenon are also necessary in order to interpret it.

Scenario 2 is taken to imply that people moved and brought their way of pottery making with them. This is assumed without being able to put forward particular reasons for such mobility, although such approaches are increasingly criticized.\(^5^2\) In order to reach the conclusion that people indeed moved, a firm quantification of the phenomenon is necessary, as well as other evidence for a prolonged presence (e.g., nonlocal building styles, ground plans, technology, burials, religious items or buildings, etc.). The way trades are learned and the learning processes in antiquity are also connected to this scenario.

Scenario 3 is perhaps the most ambiguous because people may have moved from elsewhere and combined certain traits of what they knew before with traits that had to be adapted to new circumstances. Equally possible is that local people saw material from elsewhere and copied what they saw more or less exactly (qualitative differences?).\(^5^3\) Also, local people may have seen material from elsewhere and incorporated some new traits into their way of doing things.\(^5^4\) This must be seen as a profound change in the respective *chaîne opératoires* of the objects,\(^5^5\) the sequence of steps delineating how any object of material culture has been made and, thus, of the *habitus* of its producer. Such a change in the choice of how to produce an object that has been made hundreds if not thousands of times in a certain way before cannot be considered to happen without reasons. Just to speculate about the motives from the archaeological records alone is difficult and almost always ambiguous.

Scenario 4 appears in the instance of pre-dynastic wavy handle jars, where, at first, real Palestinian imports appear in Upper Egypt in Naqada IIC, after which an adapted version of different appearance was developed probably in adjustment to the Egyptians’ own needs.\(^5^6\) Thereafter, a long development of that jar type over several centuries leads to the total degeneration of the wavy handle to a nonfunctional decorative element.\(^5^7\) In the Late Bronze Age, amphorae and pilgrim bottles are added to the Egyptian repertoire derived ultimately from Syria/Palestine.

In general, terminology for such processes needs to be chosen with care in order to describe them as accurately and unbiasedly as possible.\(^5^8\) Terms such as “acculturation,” “adaptation,” and “assimilation”\(^5^9\) remain diffuse categories and may imply the presence of people with different cultural identity in one place, in which one culture prevails over the other and the other is no longer visible in the archaeological record. Such theories need to be substantiated by more than a trait in the ceramic repertoire.
Relevant early cases of contact/interaction can be found in the Egyptian Delta as early as the Chalcolithic period in the Lower Egyptian Buto-Maadi culture, where scenario 2 was described or in the southern Levant in the Early Bronze Age I (ca. 3700–3100 BC), where scenarios 1, 2, and 3 were noted. The interpretation of such finds in early periods usually follows the line that, in scenario 2, pottery is representative of a movement of people who made their pottery according to their habits, in this case in the style of the southern Levant. A similar interpretation was offered for part of the pottery found in settlements at Tel Erani, Ma’ahaz, and En Besor in the southern Levant. As an interpretation for this phenomenon, trading posts of a somewhat fixed nature are preferred to an explanation of an invading Egyptian army, the more so as no fortifications or Egyptian weaponry were actually found. In addition, at Tel Erani, pottery forms may have been found that combine Egyptian and southern Levantine traits in a mixed culture, but the inhabitants also relied on real imports, especially of storage jars. Vessels for daily use and food preparation (bread molds, small bowls, etc.) were mostly made locally. Another interpretation stresses the mutuality of scenario 2 in Lower Egypt and the southern Levant and proposes a (temporal) mutual trade model. Of major importance for the interpretation are thorough petrographic, technological, and typological analyses in order to pinpoint the place of manufacture as exactly as possible to provide a safe basis for further inferences of directions of interaction. Similar findings are reported during the long habitation at the Delta site of Tell el-Daba/Avaris in the Middle Bronze Age/late Middle Kingdom to Second Intermediate Period, where scenarios 1, 2, and 3 are encountered.

In the following sections, an overview of the archaeological evidence for contacts between Egypt and the Mediterranean from the Early Bronze Age to the end of the Middle Bronze Age will be presented, with a brief mention of the increasing complexity of the Late Bronze Age contact network (a topic that warrants a chapter of its own). It will become clear that some periods and areas are in need of further investigation in order to answer pertinent research questions such as those concerning the origins of commodities and trade routes.

**Chronology of Contacts: The Beginnings—Early Bronze Age I-II**

The spatial proximity of the Nile Delta and the southern Levant—easily accessible overland along the northern edge of the Sinai peninsula—seems to have facilitated contact and interaction between these two zones and likely created a liminal area where cultural borders overlapped almost naturally. In addition, it must not be forgotten that the southern Levant also had contacts with other areas, thus creating a wider network that need not always have included direct contact to places far away.
Therefore, it is not a surprise that contacts and interactions between the southern Levant/southern Palestine and Lower Egypt already started in the Chalcolithic and were intensified during the Early Bronze IA. In the late Chalcolithic/Early Bronze Age IA, the importation (or exchange) of a variety of object classes and raw materials (obsidian, lapis lazuli, silver, lead, basalt, bitumen) of obvious non-Egyptian provenance into Egypt was noticed in the archaeological record. One of the most important object classes is pottery (used to transport liquid or small grained dry-goods predominantly in closed vessel shapes) because by analysing the raw material of the vessels (e.g., petrography), provenience can often be ascertained, although contradictory results occur. Moreover, quantitative analysis will give an idea of trade volume and, importantly, of the proportional distribution of imports and local material. In addition, chipped stone tools (“Canaanean” blades, tabular scrapers), stone objects made of basalt, bone tools, cedar wood, shells, copper and copper ore, and malachite were found at Lower Egyptian sites such as Buto and Maadi. Perhaps olive oil was already imported.

This represents a wide range of objects and materials that can be attributed to trade in the broadest sense, probably some kind of high-status exchange. But there are also locally made “imitations” of imports, as well as nonlocal pottery manufacturing technology (turning devices, certain tempers; i.e., scenario 2). In addition, some architectural features with affinities to the southern Levant were found. These latter attestations cannot be put down to outright trade relations but are certainly more complex (see later discussion on Tell es-Saken and Yarmouth under the same header for some interpretations).

For the Upper Egyptian Badarian culture, hardly any imported materials (or pottery) are attested in Middle/Upper Egypt in this period. The small volume may be due to solely indirect contacts via Delta cultures by means of intermediaries.

Egyptian finds in the southern Levant comprise certain disc-shaped mace heads, pottery, Nilotic shells, chipped stone tools, and palettes, but also raw materials (gold, certain stone types lacking in southern Palestine) and even Nile fish (or their bones as tools) that were exported to the Levantine littoral but also further inland from the early fifth to the mid-fourth millennium BC. The contacts seem to have been continuous, but finds are sporadic. Judging from the distribution of the finds, it seems as if no single specific site acted as a trade emporium, where such finds should have been made in greater quantity.

Contacts between (Lower) Egypt and the southern Levant including the northern Sinai region became more intense in the course of the Early Bronze Age I (ca. 3700–3100 BC). They are better attested than before, especially in the Early Bronze Age IB, contemporary with Upper Egyptian Naqada IIIA, which expanded to Lower Egypt, the reasons for which are disputed. Although detailed cultural and chronological synchronisms are still somewhat in flux, the overall pattern of the interaction between Egypt and the southern Levant seems clear. Imported items into Egypt include Canaanean flint blades, basalt bowls and more frequently pottery, and possibly copper. The main places of contact and
interaction in that period in Lower Egypt are at Minshat Abu Omar, Buto, and, to a lesser extent, Maadi because typical ceramic imports from the southern Levant are rare there. Tell el-Farkha and Tell el-Iswid in the eastern Delta also belong to this area of contact.

### Approximate comparative chronological terminology in Egypt and the Levant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approx. absolute dates</th>
<th>Egypt</th>
<th>Levant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ca. 3900–ca. 3100 B.C.</td>
<td>Naqada I–IIIC1</td>
<td>Early Bronze Age I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca. 3100/3000–ca. 2700 B.C.</td>
<td>Dynasty 1–2/Early Dynastic Period</td>
<td>Early Bronze Age II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca. 2700–ca. 2136 B.C.</td>
<td>Dynasty 3–6</td>
<td>Early Bronze Age III/IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca. 2136–ca. 2050 B.C.</td>
<td>First Intermediate Period</td>
<td>Early Bronze Age IV/Middle Bronze Age I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca. 2050–ca. 1650 B.C.</td>
<td>Middle Kingdom</td>
<td>Middle Bronze Age I/II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca. 1650–ca. 1540 B.C.</td>
<td>Second Intermediate Period</td>
<td>Middle Bronze Age II/III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca. 1540–ca. 1070 B.C.</td>
<td>New Kingdom</td>
<td>Middle Bronze Age III/Late Bronze Age I/II/Iron Age I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this period, the mutual exchange/transport of objects or goods becomes also better attested in Upper Egypt, where, from Naqada IIC onward, imported pottery is found, for example, at el-Amrah, Hierakonpolis, Naqada, and Mostagedda. The graves, equivalent to Early Bronze Age I at Abydos, are often richly equipped and suggest that they represent burials of the highest social stratum. Overall, the proportion of imported materials seems low. Some burials also contain objects of imported precious materials such as lapis lazuli, silver, turquoise (?), copper(?), obsidian, and basalt. Perhaps it is not surprising that the amount of imported goods in Egypt reached an uncontested level in the time of Naqada IIIA (Dynasty 0) at Abydos because the elite/royal burial ground of that period is located there. The discovery of about 750 imported storage jars in Naqada IIIA tombs (equivalent to the middle of Early Bronze Age I) in Cemetery U at Abydos, originally containing Palestinian imported goods, proves this point. Most of them contained wine, figs, and, to a lesser extent, vegetable oils. In addition to storage jars, only a limited amount of other pottery forms was imported into Egypt, all of closed shape and having contained products of some kinds. As usual for Egypt, the evidence is derived from burials. In contrast, many of the finds from the
southern Levant derive from settlement layers (Arad, En Besor, Tel Erani, etc.). Thus, a difference in the functional aspect and contextualization of these finds needs to be taken into consideration.

The archaeology of the southern Levant also provides information on intense interaction with Egypt in the course of this period (including Dynasty 0); for example, frequent finds of Egyptian and “Egyptianized” or “Egyptianizing” pottery at Tel Erani, Tel Halif, En Besor, and Tel Lod. The quantity of such pottery compared to Levantine Early Bronze Age pottery within the overall assemblage amounts to only 2% to 10% at most sites, which is rather low, although the absolute number of ceramic vessels appears high. The quantity of such objects and the surrounding circumstances are decisive for the interpretation. At Tell es-Sakan, a large quantity of such finds is reported in a fortified settlement, so that the interpretation as an Egyptian colonizing settlement situated in the southern Levant was put forward. Egyptian-type buildings were reported as well. The site was abandoned ca. 3000 BC for several centuries and resettled in Early Bronze Age IIIB, but then no Egyptian material was to be found in the southern Levantine plain. Also, Yarmuth and other places yielded abundant finds of Egyptian pottery. Synchronisms between Egypt and the southern Levant are provided by pre-firing incised serekhs with royal names on pottery vessels.

Archaeological remains of the Early Bronze Age II (ca 3000–2700 BC) are less well represented in Upper Egypt (only at Abydos in royal tombs), with a cluster at northern sites such as Helwan, Saqqara-West, and Abu Rawash possibly due to a shift of the center of the country. Also, the nature of the imported products seems to have changed because the volume of each vessel is smaller. Due to the apparent lack of corresponding trade in the southern Levant, where further evidence for interaction with Egypt ceases almost completely early in the 1st Dynasty, these relatively few imports were interpreted as tribute. But that may well go beyond the evidence. A contrary view maintains, however, that there may be more archaeological evidence for Egyptian objects (mainly open stone vessels [e.g., at Arad, Yarmuth] probably exchanged for their own sake, not for contents) and ceramics in the southern Levant than previously anticipated and not yet identified among previously excavated material.

Transport routes were assumed to have led overland along the north Sinai coast (“Ways of Horus”), at first by means of pack animals such as asses or donkeys. Such animals may have a range of ca. 50 km per day maximum. Onward distribution could have been easily achieved via the Nile. Although there is a possibility of boat or ship traffic sailing closely along the coast at the same time, this seems not yet fully confirmed. Only later seagoing ships are attested at the 5th Dynasty mortuary temple of Sahure. An open question remains whether the trading routes to Lower Egypt and Upper Egypt were the same or essentially different. Upper Egypt could have been reached via the Red Sea and across the Eastern Desert along wadi routes.
The archaeological findings in Egypt and the southern Levant were interpreted to show an Egyptian presence in the southern Levant to conduct “colonization” in a “peaceful way” in order to acquire local products rather than to colonize in the modern sense during Early Bronze Age IB/Naqada IIC–D to IIIA (ca 3400–3100 BC). The goal seems to have been economic exploitation because many imported vessels that contained wine were found in Cemetery U at Abydos. Asphalt, copper, and olive oil may also have been traded. Thus, the overland trade in Naqada IIIA2 seems well organized. It is thought that some Egyptians emigrated and acculturated rapidly, whereas others kept their cultural affinity to Egypt. Outside of the southern Levant, no similarly dense distribution of Egyptian and locally “copied” vessels and other objects are attested in earlier levels; only in the later stages are they distributed more widely. Later, outright trading posts with ample evidence for Egyptian sealing practices developed.\textsuperscript{112}

A four-part hierarchical model was chosen by van den Brink and Braun\textsuperscript{113} to explain interaction between Egypt and the southern Levant with very active places along the Mediterranean coast in the Early Bronze Age I and II. It seems now as if Tell es-Sakan, on the “Ways of Horus,” was a main player, close to a maritime route parallel to the coast. The distinction among sites with ample Egyptian imports and local imitations, sites with some such products, and sites without them seems to hint at patterns of local trade via intermediaries (i.e., without direct contact of these lesser sites to Egypt). Tentatively, van den Brink and Braun reconstruct developing social stratification with Egyptian luxury items belonging to elite material culture.\textsuperscript{114}

The dichotomy between representations of defeated enemies around the 1st Dynasty in Egypt on various items and peaceful relations found in archaeology was explained by means of Loprieno’s topos/mimesis model.\textsuperscript{115} However, evidence is lacking for military presence and repression, as well as reasons for the ceasing of Egyptian archaeological finds in the southern Levant in Early Bronze II/III\textsuperscript{116} in a more comprehensive reconstruction. Watrin uses scenes on some roughly contemporary knife handles for a political interpretation; namely, for wars between chiefdoms.\textsuperscript{117} But those scenes might also relate to mythical or ideological scenes far removed from this period.

A diachronic consideration of the types of objects and raw materials exchanged between Egypt and the Levant hints at an exchange of exotic materials needed by high-status Egyptians at first, followed by a more exploitative scheme with possible Egyptian presence and/or trading posts in the southern Levant. After a gap in the evidence during the Early Bronze Age II on both sides, a change in the quality of the objects being exported to the Levant is notable (e.g., high-quality stone vessels and palettes), which bears witness to a change in the social structure in that area. Thus, the relationship between political units in Egypt and the southern Levant seems to have changed.\textsuperscript{118}

After the end of the 2nd Dynasty, sources suggest that Byblos became much more important as a trading partner during the Old Kingdom,\textsuperscript{119} probably based on the Egyptian need to obtain cedar wood (used, e.g., for the funerary boat of Khufu of the 4th Dynasty).\textsuperscript{120} Although many Egyptian objects are known from this site, only a few are
Egypt and the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age: The Archaeological Evidence

well-contexted, indicating a date range from the 4th to the 6th Dynasty. Opinions differ as to whether reduced contact with the southern Levant during the Early Bronze Age II/III and IV is proved by stone vessels and stone palettes found in that area because many of those items may represent heirlooms due to their exotic and intrinsic values. Additional archaeological evidence in the form of pottery imported from Egypt to the southern Levant or locally imitated from secure contexts does not come forward. Some connected this shift from the southern to the northern Levant to the introduction of seaborne traffic, which afforded direct access to Byblos. This interaction is seen as an exchange of prestige items with local products on an elite level through royal emissaries.

Chronology of Contacts: Expansion and Cessation of Relations in Early Bronze Age III/IV

During Dynasties 3 to 6, textual and pictorial sources for contacts with the Mediterranean increased slightly and added several facets to the interpretational scope of archaeology, although the original wealth must have been much larger than what is now preserved. In spite of this scarcity, textual and pictorial references dominated the historical reconstruction of Egyptian foreign relations in the Old Kingdom, although several ancient Egyptian designations for particular groups of non-Egyptians and areas are not identified beyond dispute. The historical validity and exact meaning of depictions of ships with Asiatic crew or hostages (women and children were also brought to Egypt with these ships) from the mortuary temple of Sahure and the causeway of Unas are disputed, as are siege and battle scenes with Asiatic cities in several private tombs of the 6th Dynasty.

Archaeological evidence for Egyptian pottery in secure Early Bronze III and IV contexts in the southern Levant (modern Israel, Jordan, and Palestine) except the Sinai is overall lacking, but a small number of Egyptian objects mainly of stone or semiprecious stone (imported and locally made palettes, mace heads, beads from carnelian and faience, and stone vessels) were found at Numeira, Bab edh-Dhra, Tel Halif, Yarmuth, Ai, Megiddo, Beth Yerah, and perhaps Jericho. The small number and size of these objects does not necessarily prove direct contacts between Egypt and the southern Levant, but these finds were interpreted as possible diplomatic gifts in the light of a contemporary tomb inscription.

Further north, the important inland site of Ebla also yielded some evidence for imported Egyptian stone vessels of open shape, probably remnants of diplomatic exchange in the Old Kingdom. Similar finds from other northern sites such as Ugarit, Hama, Alalakh, or Qatna/Mishrife were derived from much later contexts and thus do not add evidence to
contacts in the Old Kingdom, but considerably later, and the nature of these contacts may have been quite different.

Two possibly Egyptian items, stone bowls, were found in Cyprus and the Cyclades in securely dateable contexts, whereas only on Crete were a slightly larger concentration and variety of Egyptian objects identified in contexts of Early Minoan II to III. Again, open stone vessels are a major component of the few finds, but also one faience vessel. These sporadic finds—traded for their own sake not being containers of some commodity—may also have reached Crete indirectly rather than in regular direct contact.

Perhaps naturally, the best known archaeological evidence consists of ceramic imports (scenario 1) from the Levant into Egypt, namely vessels and fragments of “combed ware” representing large storage jars and one-handled jugs. Such containers are mainly known from the exhaustive excavations of the elite cemeteries of the Old Kingdom (4th to 6th Dynasty) at Giza, Abusir, and Saqqara, with much smaller quantities from Dahshur, Meydum, Matmar, and Edfu. Only a minor component comes from contemporary settlement sites at Giza and Elephantine. Other imported materials include wood (e.g., cedar: funerary boat of Khufu, two coffins) and very few lapis lazuli beads distributed across the country. The small items especially could have taken a quite indirect route until they were finally deposited in tombs.

The reidentification of the mastaba tomb of the vizier Weni of the 6th Dynasty at Abydos also allows us to regard imported containers found there in context. In his autobiography, Weni stated that he had undertaken a major military campaign against the “Asiatic sand-dwellers” in the reign of pharaoh Pepy I. Among the ceramic material that can most probably be linked to this and two contemporary tombs of high officials is a minimum number of 11 imported flat-based transport containers from the Levant belonging typologically to the Early Bronze Age III. These fragments represent material imported to Upper Egypt, and the currently existing corpus of such material is extremely small. Only three vessels are known from tombs at Matmar and Edfu. Thus, a single find increased this corpus by a staggering 360%. From this, it also becomes obvious that firm conclusions can hardly be built on such a foundation as yet. Because these vessels were found close to high-status burials, the availability of goods transported in them points to an occurrence in elite contexts also in the 6th Dynasty. The closeness to the king might have afforded the tomb owner the favor of obtaining imported goods that came in such containers. That it was indeed the contents and not the vessels could be ascertained by the fact that some content still stuck to the vessels. Analyses have yet to be conducted. The fabrics of the fragments from Abydos seem to belong to the same fabric group, albeit in variants. This suggests a single trading place for these vessels.

In total, the volume of these trade contacts between Egypt and the southern and northern Levant cannot be called overwhelmingly large, although there may still be some unidentified items, especially transport containers. In addition, the basis of evidence is not the same because, as always, the Egyptian finds are biased toward coming from
cemeteries and not from settlements. As for contacts with Crete, current evidence is still so scarce that direct trade/exchange seems unlikely.

Scrutiny of the origin and distribution patterns of the transport containers of this period is still in its infancy, and new work in this area will be highly informative. The goods transported also warrant closer examination by means of residue analysis, with the consensus on wares most probably imported into Egypt during the Old Kingdom being coniferous resins, vegetable oil (olive?), and perhaps wine. In places, the evidence is very patchy, and this perhaps has been too readily interpreted as interruption of contacts. New excavations and new analytical methods constantly bring further evidence to light so that updating of interpretations is repeatedly necessary.

Relations between the Levant and Egypt seem to have come to an end, at least archaeologically, during the Early Bronze Age IV, equivalent to the late 6th Dynasty and First Intermediate Period (ca. 2136–2023 BC). As reason for the cessation of any kind of foreign relations, a complete sociopolitical collapse on both sides has been postulated, where Asiatic products were no longer needed (or could not be obtained) on the Egyptian side and could not be produced on the Asiatic side. That material wealth on a regional level did not totally decline in the First Intermediate Period in Egypt has been shown by means of a thorough analysis of the cemeteries straddling the late Old Kingdom and the beginning of the Middle Kingdom. Among this archaeological material were no imported goods, except a few of those jars already mentioned earlier and dating to the late Old Kingdom. It is, of course, possible that such material might have been present only as fragments, which would not necessarily have been collected in the early excavations. But as neither Saqqara West nor Ehnasya el-Medina/Herakleopolis Magna, two typical sites situated in the northern part of Egypt in that period yielded any imported ceramic material, complete or fragmentary, despite continued study, this possibility appears increasingly unlikely. Moreover, Herakleopolis was the center of rule in the north during that period and would have been the natural end point for any imported high-status goods.

The Chronology of Contact: A New Beginning: The Middle Bronze Age

Except for possible military clashes between “Asiatics” and Egyptians recorded in several tombs and the stela of Nesumontu in the early Middle Kingdom, a break in contacts between the Eastern Mediterranean and Egypt seems to have occurred. Also, the nature of the archaeological evidence available for the Southern Levant/Canaan, for example, precludes an unequivocal interpretation of the relations with Egypt during this period.
The so-called execration texts seem to demonstrate that the rulers of Egypt were in (ideological) opposition to rulers/elders of other countries, who were also defeated by magical means. This magic ritual is first attested in the Old Kingdom and continues into the Late Period. The texts from the Middle Kingdom seem to show which areas were known to Egypt and were powerful enough to pose a threat to Egyptian borders; moreover, they were taken to demonstrate Egyptian knowledge of the political situation in the Southern Levant. Legitimate doubt has been cast on this view, with the argument that several sites mentioned in the execration texts were not inhabited in the contemporary period. However, the figures and texts name Nubian, Libyan, and Asiatic notables and places, but none from the Aegean was identified.

Information about connections increases again, for example, with the inscription of Amenemhet II on blocks discovered reused in Memphis. It gives an important account of the events of two years in this pharaoh’s reign. Included are not only reports on military exploits to Syria/Palestine, but also on the booty brought back, including the numbers of prisoners of war as well as information on seaborne and overland trade relations, including cargo obtained. Although many details remain disputed, such as the localisation of certain places, length and route of voyages, or how many trips were undertaken by ship and by land, this source is a valuable witness attesting to the types of trade goods, commodities procured, the amounts of goods, and ship building. This evidence seems to mark a difference in relations between the northern (Byblos/Ebla) and southern Levant.

Another aspect of relations is represented by the famous depiction of an “Asiatic” caravan delivering galena (kohl) to Khnumhotep, “mayor” and “Overseer of the Eastern Desert.” This scene shows commerce in a nonroyal tomb context at Beni Hassan (tomb no 3, reign of Senwosret II). Khnumhotep acted as a trading partner on behalf of the king, and to receive such a caravan was part of his office. Naturally, in this context, overland contacts to the northeast, the Sinai, or Syria/Palestine are shown. Whether this was a unique event or regular traffic remains largely conjectural.

Archaeological objects attesting to trade contacts also increase again in the course of the 12th Dynasty in scenario 1 (see earlier list). Among the earliest commodities traded belong goods delivered in an attractive ceramic vessel class called Levantine Painted Ware, which is of Levantine origin and first appeared infrequently in Egypt in the earlier part of the 12th Dynasty at sites such as Tell el-Daba, Kom el-Hisn, Lisht, Lahun, Edfu, and Elephantine. After the early to mid 13th Dynasty, this type of pottery generally petered out. Currently, it is believed that the provenance of this ceramic ware is not to be sought at one single site but that it was probably produced in several places along the Syrian/Levantine coast. Most of the vessel types belong to closed shapes (jars, jugs, and juglets of various sizes), thus implying a transport function for these containers. But the attractively painted patterns, burnished surfaces, and new vessel types (e.g., dipper juglets) might have given the vessels an additional intrinsic value because nothing similar existed in the contemporary Egyptian pottery repertoire for some time to come. Similarly, rare ceramic imports of “luxury wares” came into Egypt from Crete, among
them Kamares Ware. Such wares are also found in the Levant, thus attesting to the existence of a widely woven trade and/or political network in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean. Soon, also Middle Cypriote Wares began to be circulated in this area. These wares have also important implications on the chronological network of the Eastern Mediterranean, but these cannot be discussed in detail here. The lack of proper quantification represents a severe shortcoming because imported (and sometimes pretty) pottery is always published first and usually in no meaningful relation to the amount of ordinary local ware from the same contexts. Thus, the volume of imported material and of the trade it represents may appear out of proportion and actually larger than it really was.

A remarkable find is the so-called “el-Tôd treasure” consisting of more than 150 folded silver bowls, ingots, other silver objects, and lapis lazuli items (raw material and finished objects, from several areas and probably earlier periods) in four bronze chests inscribed with the name of Amenemhat II. The date of the deposition of the hoard under the floor of a temple remains unclear. It has been suspected that the silver cups originated in Crete, but scientific analyses of the metal of two cups suggested Anatolia or Greece as source for the raw material. Exact typological parallels for the silver bowls do not seem to exist in either the Aegean or in the East, but there are singular elements that can be paralleled at a variety of locations in the Eastern Mediterranean. Interestingly, a typologically quite exact parallel has come to light at Tell el-Daba in Egypt in a late Second Intermediate Period (mid-15th Dynasty) context, except that it was made from a local sandy Nile clay fabric. The red brown surface is burnished, a treatment often used for imitations of vessels originally from Syria/Palestine (scenario 2). Although this might shed some light on the origins of the style of such bowls, it cannot serve as ultimate proof for the place of its derivation or dating until some original silver cups are found because the routes of inspiration need not to have been direct or immediate.

Tell el-Daba, ancient Avaris, situated in the northeastern Nile Delta, at a reloading site from sea to Nile, is particularly suited when one wishes to sketch relations to the Mediterranean because a large proportion of commodities seems to have come into Egypt via this site. The long habitation history of roughly 600 years allows considerable insights into the internal developments of settlements, burial customs, and sacral and palatial installations, but a thorough discussion of the site and its importance exceeds the scope of this chapter. In the early Middle Kingdom, the Levantine Painted Ware was found imported to the site, and then, in the late 12th and early to mid 13th Dynasties, increasing volumes of Middle Bronze Age transport containers and other pottery from Syria/Palestine are found. Thus, its interpretation as a harbor town and Egypt’s “door to the northeast” controlling or at least overseeing the land route to the North Sinai and the southern Levant/Palestine seems assured and is supported by two scarabs with an administrative title suggesting an office in this line and a foreign name. Whereas in the early Middle Kingdom evidence points to a purely Egyptian settlement with only a few imports, in the course of the late 12th and early 13th Dynasties a non-Egyptian presence makes itself felt, expressed by some traits of Syro-Palestinian burial customs.
Egypt and the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age: The Archaeological Evidence

(e.g. donkey burials, Syro-Palestinian weapons, personal adornment [toggle pins, metal belts, and diadems], supine body position with flexed legs). It is worth noting that in the different settlement areas variations occur in the total number of burials in the early to mid 13th Dynasty and that there are several burials without obvious Syro-Palestinian influence. Certain phenomena described earlier also occur in the archaeological record of this period; for example, the very exact imitation of previously imported pottery by means of local fabrics (i.e. scenario 2), and it was interpreted in a similar way as is usually done for prehistoric sites—that immigrants with first-hand technical knowledge had come into Tell el-Daba and (were) settled there. Although additional written sources indicate the presence of “Asiatics” in Egypt at other sites (e.g., at Kahun, Lisht) in the late Middle Kingdom due to military campaigns, a harbor environment may by necessity be an international hub where a multitude of external influences appear and intermingle and also leave traces in the archaeological record. It seems reasonable to assume that this harbor was under Egyptian control as long as the country was under the political control of the 12th and early 13th Dynasties, although no explicit evidence can be produced. Imported materials were delivered to Egyptian sites further south (Memphis, Lahun, Lisht, Elephantine), although it seems that the proportions are much smaller than at Tell el-Daba and that this distribution was organized along the Nile purely within Egypt.

The development of material culture into a real mixed culture with both Egyptian and Syro-Palestinian elements only took place with the advent of the 15th Dynasty (equivalent to archaeological Phase E/2), about 50–70 years after the late Middle Kingdom (ca. 1650 BC, later Second Intermediate Period). At that time, the ceramic repertoire changed rather suddenly and included both Egyptian and Syro-Palestinian traits to form truly new and “mixed” forms. Further clear influences from Syria-Palestine can be already seen in the ground plans of a number of slightly earlier temples, whereas others are Egyptian, and the use of a Syrian palace ground plan in the 15th Dynasty. The trade activities in this period are much reduced compared to the earlier volume of trade with the Eastern Mediterranean. Quantitative analysis of the large transport containers used to import commodities such as resin, vegetable oils, and wine shows very clearly that the amount of the jars found in settlement areas drops considerably from about 25% of the whole ceramic repertoire in the late 12th and early to mid 13th Dynasty to around 10% in the early part of the Second Intermediate Period, and finally to below 5% and less in the later Second Intermediate Period (15th Dynasty). Thus, Avaris seems to have lost connections with previously active trading partners. Which party was responsible for this decrease—Egypt or the former partners in the eastern Mediterranean—remains currently hard to fathom. What is clear, however, is that hardly any imported ceramic material penetrated to the south of Egypt at this time (less than 1%, e.g., in Memphis) exemplifying a loss of contact between the Delta and sites in northern Upper Egypt or differently structured demands.
Egyptian objects and stone vessels of the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period found in the eastern Mediterranean are manifold and varied. A major problem of many of these finds, beyond the assertion that high-status gifts were given, is represented by their often being much older than the context in which they were found\(^{188}\) (e.g., a stone vessels of a 12th Dynasty princess in a Late Bronze Age context at Mishrife in Syria\(^{189}\)). For this reason no complete list of such finds will be given here.\(^{190}\)

A find hinting particularly to high-status gift exchange is from the “Tomb of the Lord of the Goats” at Ebla, which belonged to an Eblaite king: an Egyptian mace with the name of Harnedjheriotef.\(^{191}\)

Of some importance are Egyptian scarabs found on Crete in primary contexts, which attest a connection between Egypt and the island in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages.\(^{192}\) Increasingly, certain motifs or icons (lotus flower, the Goddess Taweret, and others) are also exchanged in the Eastern Mediterranean, and this can be explained by moving objects and moving people,\(^{193}\) but the dating, direction of transfer, and inspiration are much harder to ascertain.

Probably during the Second Intermediate Period, a larger number of stone vessels were available and distributed throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. Some scholars connected such finds with the organized looting of high-status Middle Kingdom tombs during the latter part of the Second Intermediate Period, in the course of which prestige items were sold abroad,\(^{194}\) but much of the textual evidence may have been later “propaganda” by the victors in order to be seen to have restored the proper world order.\(^{195}\) The find contexts of such items were mostly tombs with a long habitation history and several interments, so that no clear idea about the exact date of arrival can be formed. Thus, most of the Egyptian items only hint to an indirect connection. An exception is a calcite lid in a primary context with the inscribed name of the Hyksos king Khyan in the palace of Knossos, which seems to indicate some kind of official connection between the two realms.\(^{196}\)

More recent work in the Levant has led to a number of identifications of exported Egyptian pottery mainly made of more durable Marl clays of the Middle Kingdom in Middle Bronze Age II contexts representing scenario 1. Noteworthy are archaeological contexts at Ashkelon,\(^{197}\) Tel Ifshar,\(^{198}\) Sidon,\(^{199}\) probably Byblos,\(^{200}\) Fadous Kfarabida,\(^{201}\) und Tell Arqa\(^{202}\) that provide important points of reference for synchronization of archaeological levels. Unfortunately, there is as yet no study that treats the overall quantity of such exports to the Levant in relation to the local Levantine pottery in order to properly appreciate the type and volume of interaction between Egypt and the coastal Levant. Currently, it seems unlikely to represent a reciprocal trade considering the amount of imported “Canaanite” transport jars found at, for example, Tell el-Daba.\(^{203}\) Of course, we are only at the beginning of appreciating exports from Egypt into the Levant, and more may be identified in the near future. Because Egyptian pottery has only been reported from coastal sites or sites very close to the coast in both the southern and northern Levant, these vessels may be by-products of the “Byblos run” in the widest
sense undertaken in this period along the coast in order to conduct trade with Byblos, although such ceramic vessels are known from both settlements and cemeteries. Another possibility is that this Egyptian material was indirectly distributed to such sites (e.g., from Byblos) if the amount of imported material is considered at Memphis, which is much lower than at Tell el-Daba (see earlier discussion) as a parallel case.
The Chronology of Contact: Increasing Complexity of Contacts in the Late Bronze Age

In the Late Bronze Age more sources inside and outside of Egypt are available attesting to a much more complicated network and various kinds of interaction, which include trade, diplomacy, and warfare. The sheer amount of archaeological and textual material makes it increasingly difficult to combine these source types.

The invaluable Uluburun shipwreck\(^{204}\) attests to the volume and the use of ships for conducting trade, which probably came from the Levantine coast and represents perhaps a “state controlled” exchange of goods as known from the Amarna correspondence and acted as intermediary between several political entities. In spite of this evident first class source material, it remains disputed whether trade was entirely centralized with royal involvement or if individual efforts for trade relations are a viable model for thinking of such interaction.\(^{205}\) Similarly divided is the opinion on regular direct contacts between the Aegean and Egypt even in the Late Bronze Age and on the actual origin of the proprietors of the Uluburun ship.\(^{206}\)

From early on, rows of defeated foreign people (oasis dwellers, Libyans, Asiatics) bring “tributes” or “presents” to the king of Egypt. Also, foreign people as prisoners or hostages are brought to Egypt and represent contacts between Egypt and Libya, Syria/Palestine, and Nubia (e.g., in the mortuary temple of Sahure in the Old Kingdom).\(^{207}\) A later example for such a ceremony can be found in the New Kingdom/Late Bronze Age tomb of Rechmire, who was vizier during the later reign of Thutmosis III and the early reign of Amenhotep II.\(^{208}\) Thus, not only tombs of high officials who were in charge of the organization and reception of these “gifts” show such scenes and inscriptions, but also temple reliefs. The question arises here to what extent such scenes may have been historical or “topical” because Pharaoh rules the whole world according to ancient Egyptian ideology.\(^{209}\)

Diplomatic marriages are proved in principle by the presence of the tomb of three foreign wives of Thutmosis III\(^{210}\) and by written documents of the New Kingdom.\(^{211}\) The mighty New Kingdom pharaohs conducted numerous military campaigns\(^{212}\) to the northeastern lands. Innumerable inscriptions and depictions report such campaigns (and invariably their success) that are eternalized on temple walls (especially at Karnak [e.g., Annals of Thutmosis III]\(^ {213}\) and at Medinet Habu with the Sea Peoples campaign of Ramses III\(^ {214}\)) focused naturally on the Egyptian point of view. Although such evidence certainly reflects contemporary Egyptian ideology, it probably does not invent events out of the blue.\(^ {215}\) But the exact face value of these reliefs remains unclear, unless similar inscriptions are also found abroad, such as immovable rock inscriptions (e.g., in Nahr el-Kelb of Ramesses II).\(^ {216}\) Such sources prove the physical presence of an Egyptian army abroad and corroborate Egyptian texts. Mere stelae could have been moved after erection and were frequently found in secondary deposition. Moreover, being critical, it remains disputed
Egypt and the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age: The Archaeological Evidence

whether campaigns were as successful as expressed in these texts because of the topical thematization of the victorious Egyptian king as ruler of the world. Additional sources, such as the Hittite records in the case of the battle of Qadesh, exemplify caution in interpreting the texts. At the same time, it is proved that a conflict actually arose between those two polities.

In addition to these events, increasing attestations of people born outside Egypt and climbing the social ladder come to light, such as the New Kingdom vizier Aper-el, who did not adapt his foreign name to his Egyptian role as high official. Already in the First Intermediate Period some evidence exists to show that it was not necessary to deny one’s descent on a day-to-day level.

Whether diplomatic relations with the Aegean in the New Kingdom as depicted in private tombs are to be seen as tokens of submission on the part of Aegean dignitaries or should be understood as a “present that was to be returned in kind,” somewhat on the Homeric model, remains also unclear. Aegean emissaries (wrongly referred to as Aegean “tribute bringers”) termed Keftiu are depicted in Theban Late Bronze Age tombs of high officials—mainly viziers and High Priests of Amun of Karnak—in the period of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. They are shown together with other emissaries from Syria, Nubia, and, more rarely, Punt bringing products for the king, which his administrators receive in his stead. Whereas the other peoples occur also earlier and later (until Amenophis III) than the Aegeans in similar depictions, it seems that no Aegean people themselves were brought as prisoners/hostages/slaves, unlike Nubians and Asiatics. Also later inscriptive mention of Aegeans was made but then they were composed of various elements typically belonging to depictions of Syrians. Thus, it is difficult to be certain whether this kind of depiction represents a topos of submission of the whole world under the pharaoh’s rule, such as by the personified conquests of foreign cities and countries, or factual evidence for institutionalized gift giving or the submission of certain countries.

An entirely different quality of relationship between Minoan Crete and Egypt in the early 18th Dynasty is illustrated by the Minoan frescos found in an early New Kingdom palatial context at the northeastern limit of the Egyptian realm, at Avaris. This truly sensational find puts the interpretation of this relationship to a test. Accordingly, it has been explained by at least one scholar as a token of close dynastic ties between the rulers of the two countries, but this is not the only possibility.

Conclusion

During the New Kingdom, sources and source types multiply and reach an entirely different quality of information on interconnections. The extent and expansion of Egypt’s contacts reaches an unparalleled level from the Levant to Syria/Palestine and the Hittites to Anatolia, Greece, and Cyprus, and this needs a separate interdisciplinary treatment.
that goes well beyond the scope of this chapter. Although many new research results were achieved in the last 15 years, seminal works such as Helck’s and Redford’s cannot be replaced at this moment and would only seem feasibly tackled by larger interdisciplinary research groups.

More research is needed in identifying Egyptian material among the archaeological evidence in the eastern Mediterranean in all periods to gain a fuller picture of contacts between Egypt and her neighbors and to expand the interpretational framework (scenarios 1–4). Especially in the New Kingdom, increasing amounts of real Egyptian imports and “Egyptianizing” pottery are being found in the Levant. In combination with contextual information, such finds will greatly enhance the interpretational value of the archaeological evidence in reconstructing Egypt’s contacts. Much the same holds true for the study of the origins of imported ceramic wares found in Egypt.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank D. Aston, G. Moers, C. Jurman, and C. Knoblauch for reading drafts of this chapter. D. Aston and C. Jurman corrected the English; any remaining mistakes are my own responsibility. Thanks are also due to C. Knoblauch for drawing my attention to the work of A. Ben-Tor (2006) and C. Jurman to Quack (2007). To Eliot Braun and D. Aston, I am indebted for permission to cite their unpublished articles. The research for this chapter was conducted whilst directing project V147-G21 awarded by the Austrian Science Fund.

Bibliography


Egypt and the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age: The Archaeological Evidence


Campagno, Marcelo. “Ethnicity and Changing Relationships Between Egyptian and South Levantines During the Early Dynastic Period.” In *Egypt at Its Origins 2*, edited by B.
Egypt and the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age: The Archaeological Evidence


Egypt and the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age: The Archaeological Evidence


Egypt and the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age: The Archaeological Evidence


Notes:
Egypt and the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age: The Archaeological Evidence


(8) Note that not even the nomenclature of ships and their make is undisputed in the Egyptian sources. See Shelley Wachsmann, Aegeans in the Theban Tombs, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 20 (Leuven: Peeters, 1987), 119-121.

(9) Some evidence for an indirect trade network has been gathered for the chalcolithic period esp. through distribution of Nilotic shells. See Eliot Braun and Edwin C. M. van den Brink, “Appraising South Levantine-Egyptian Interaction: Recent Discoveries from Israel and Egypt,” in Egypt at Its Origins 2, edited by B. Midant-Reynes and Y. Tristan, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 172 (Leuven, Paris, and Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2008), 648-650. See also the report of Harkhuf in his autobiography. He brought an African dancing dwarf for the pharaoh in the Old Kingdom: Miriam Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), vol.1, The Old and Middle Kingdoms, 23-


(22) E.g., bound captives from the 6th Dynasty. Earlier representations are more ambiguous, in that the bound captives might be Egyptians; cf. Diana Craig-Patch, *Dawn of Egyptian Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011), 156–159. For Aegeans in the Late Bronze Age, see Wachsmann, *Aegeans*; for Sea Peoples, O’Connor, “The Sea Peoples.”


Egypt and the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age: The Archaeological Evidence


(32) Moers, “Unter den Sohlen Pharaohs,” 108; first occurring in the early 12th Dynasty, this combination becomes standardized.


(36) Panagiotopoulos, “Keftiu.”


(38) See Smith, “Ethnicity and Culture.”


(40) Marcus, “Amenemhet II,” with thorough discussion of this ambivalent text.


(43) Trade: Braun and van den Brink, “Appraising South Levantine-Egyptian Interaction,” 646; to a certain extent.


(45) E.g., an oval subterranean dwelling at Maadi is considered to be strongly influenced by Levantine architectural traditions; its exact dating is subject to discussion. See Braun and van den Brink, “Appraising South Levantine-Egyptian Interaction,” 649–650, 658.


(47) Antonaccio, “(Re)defining Ethnicity,” 48–49.

(48) Often descriptions of objects and pottery lack an exact assessment as to how “similar” these “imitations” or “copies” are to the original items, thus leaving too much room for speculation. A positive example is from Edwin C. M. van den Brink, “An Egyptian Presence at Tel Lod,” in Egypt and the Levant, Interrelations from the 4th Through to the 3rd Millennium BC, edited by E. C. M. van den Brink and T. E. Levy (London: Leicester University Press, 2002), 286–305, esp. 297, who described a wine jar of Egyptian type that was so well produced it could only be identified as local southern Levantine imitation by petrography. Detailed typological, technological, and contextual comparison is necessary to analyze the degree of (dis)similarity as major inferences are made about who produced this pottery based on such observations. See Sowada, Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean, 21–22, for further discussion and difficulties in terminology and methodology.
Egypt and the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age: The Archaeological Evidence


(50) Discussed by Hendrickx and Bavay, “The Relative Chronological Position,” 75–76.


(54) Stockhammer, Conceptualizing Cultural Hybridization, 55. See Hosler, “Potters of Las Animas,” for a modern example.


(57) Watrin, in “Pottery as an Economical Parameter,” 1764–1765, uses the term “acculturation” for this process.


(59) Based on definitions going back to Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits “Memorandum,” 149–152.


den Brink, “An Egyptian Presence,” 296, 299 at Tel Lod; de Miroschedji, “The Socio-Political Dynamics.”

Levy and van den Brink, “Interaction Models,” 18; Watrin, in “Pottery as an Economical Parameter;” 1753, theorizes that the chalcolithic Palestinians came as traders for shells, stone vessels, or precious metals or as an implantation of a segment of a Palestinian chieftain in the Delta. Watrin, “Pottery as an Economical Parameter;” 1764–1765, further maintains that cultural Palestinians stayed on in the Delta into the Early Bronze Age I (Naqada II).

Ruth Amiran and E. C. M. van den Brink, “The Ceramic Assemblage from Tel Ma’ahaz, Stratum I (Seasons 1975–1976),” in Egypt and the Levant, Interrelations from the 4th Through to the 3rd Millennium BC, edited by E. C. M. van den Brink and T. E. Levy (London: Leicester University Press, 2002), 273–279; Early Bronze Age IB both real imports and locally produced material of Egyptian style and type.


Porat, “Local Industry of Egyptian Pottery,” 109–110; 118. See Watrin, “Pottery as an Economical Parameter;” 1769, for a critical view. Braun and van den Brink, “Appraising South Levantine-Egyptian Interaction,” 655, assign the Egyptian and “Egyptianizing” material to Level B, not to the earlier Level C. Thorough analysis of the site is necessary to bring light to this problem.


Egypt and the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age: The Archaeological Evidence


(72) Hartung, Umm el-Qaab II, 248–296. Hendrickx and Bavay, “The Relative Chronological Position,” 58–80, list all occurrences of these materials in the pre-dynastic and Early Dynastic Periods in Egypt; for turquoise, bitumen, see Watrin, “Pottery as an Economical Parameter,” 1759. For obsidian in Tell Iswid in the Delta str. IV, see Watrin, “Pottery as an Economical Parameter,” 1764.

(73) Köhler, and Ownby, “Levantine Imports.”

(74) Hartung, Umm el-Qaab II, 62–66.


(76) Hartung, Umm el-Qaab II, 264–294; Maczynska, “Some Remarks.”


(78) Hartung, Umm el-Qaab II, 357–378; Maczynska, “Some Remarks,” 767–769, for a list of imports with bibliography.


(85) Faltings, “The Chronological Frame.”


(88) Note that the years in the chart are rounded approximations modelled on Kenneth Kitchen, “Regnal and Genealogical Data of Ancient Egypt”, in *The Synchronisation of Civilisations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Millennium BC*, edited by M. Bietak, (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences 2000), 39–52. For before 3000 BC see references in note 82.


(90) Watrin, “Pottery as an Economical Parameter,” 1766. See also Hendrickx and Bavay, “The Relative Chronological Position.”

(91) Hartung, *Umm el-Qaab II*, 342–344. Note that the identification of ceramic fabrics as imports at Abydos is not unequivocally accepted despite the application of various scientific methods. See Hartung, *Umm el-Qaab II*, 62–66.

(92) Hartung, *Umm el-Qaab II*, 66–70.


More stringent terminology needs to be developed to describe the findings. Presumably “Egyptian” means real imports from Egypt, whereas “Egyptianizing” and “Egyptianized” signify locally manufactured pottery with strong affinity to Egyptian shapes and technology.


Braun and van den Brink, “Appraising South Levantine-Egyptian Interaction, 659-667. The authors use the minimum number of vessels present.


de Miroschedji, “Egypt and Southern Canaan,” 275.

de Miroschedji, “The Socio-Political Dynamics,” 43–44: Egyptian pottery for storage and domestic purposes, both locally produced.

See, for a convenient collation of sites and literature, M. Campagno, “Ethnicity and Changing Relationships,” 691; Braun, and van den Brink, “Appraising South Levantine-Egyptian Interaction,” 661.


Braun and van den Brink, “Appraising South Levantine-Egyptian Interaction,” 675.


Egypt and the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age: The Archaeological Evidence

(111) Landström, Ships of the Pharaohs, 63–66.


(114) Braun and van den Brink, “Appraising South Levantine-Egyptian Interaction,” 672–675.


(121) Sowada, Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean, 7–10; 128–141, esp. 140.


(123) Sowada, Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean, 15–16.

(124) de Mioschedji, “The Socio-Political Dynamics,” 47.


(126) See Landström, Ships of the Pharaohs, 63–65; Sowada, Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean, 7–9, 201, and fig. 43, pl. 19, with bibliography; Bietak, “Egypt and the Levant,” 418–419.

(127) Sowada, Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean, 11–12, with references.

(128) Sowada, Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean, 17–18; except for one possible example from Bab edh-Dhra, 99; for the Sinai, see 91–93 with bibliography; see also De Mioschedji, “Egypt and Southern Canaan,” 280.


Egypt and the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age: The Archaeological Evidence


(147) Teodozja Rzeuska, *Saqqara II, Pottery of the Late Old Kingdom* (Warsaw: Editions Neriton, 2006); see Bettina Bader, “A Preliminary Report on Pottery Found at Herakleopolis Magna (Ehnsaya el-Medina),” *Cahiers de la Céramique Égyptienne* 9 (2011), fig. 4.55, for the only possible FIP foreign import at Ehnsaya during 10 seasons of work.

(148) Bietak, “From Where Came the Hyksos,” 145-146 with references; Susan L. Cohen, in *Canaanites, Chronologies, and Connections*, *The Relationship of Middle Bronze Age IIA Canaan to Middle Kingdom Egypt*. Studies in the Archaeology and History of the Levant 3 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 34-36, voices skepticism as regards the historicity of such scenes.


In a quantitative study of settlement pottery of the late Middle Kingdom, the only Cypriote vessel is represented by one body fragment opposed to tens of thousands of local ware. See Bader, “Contacts,” 59, fig. 11b.


Höflmayer, *Die Synchronisierung*, 81–89.


See Bader, “Traces of Foreign Settlers.”


Bader, *Tell el-Daba XIX*, for quantification of the volume of storage jars.

Bietak, *Avaris*, 41–42 and fig. 35.1; Bietak, “From Where Came the Hyksos,” 147 and pl. 13.


Bader, “Contacts.”

Bader, “Traces of Foreign Settlers”; see discussion of methodology and implications also in Bader, “Cultural Mixing.” There may be various other possibilities see Hosler, “Potters of Las Animas.”


For a recent summary, see Maté Petrik, “Foreign Groups at Lahun During the Late Middle Kingdom,” in *From Illahun to Djeme, Papers Presented in Honour of Ulrich Luft*, edited by E. Bechtold, A. Gulyás, and A. Hasznos. British Archaeological Reports,
EGYPT AND THE MEDITERRANEAN IN THE BRONZE AGE: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE


(185) See Bader, “Cultural Mixing”; Bietak, “From Where Came the Hyksos.”

(186) Bader, *Tell el-Daba XIX*, 653-660, 683; similar in Bietak, “From Where Came the Hyksos,” 152.


Kopetzky, “Egyptian Pottery.”


See quantifications in Bader, Tell el-Daba XIX.

Conveniently, for extensive bibliography, see Ü. Yalcin, C. Pulak, and R. Slotta (eds.), *Das Schiff von Uluburun. Welthandel vor 3000 Jahren*, Catalogue to Exhibition (Bochum: Deutsches Bergbau Museum, 2005).


Spalinger, *War in Ancient Egypt*, with references.


For the opinion that Ramesses III emulated texts and scenes of Ramesses II with discussion, see Redford, “Egypt and Western Asia,” 11. See Sowada, *Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean*, 6, for the Old Kingdom.


Moers “Unter den Sohlen Pharaohs,” 142.

The *Odyssey* frequently refers to generous presents that are given to the ruler of a neighboring realm, but with the expectation that a return present of at least the same value would be given. See Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. A. T. Murray, Loeb Classical
Egypt and the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age: The Archaeological Evidence


(222) See Wachmann, Aegeans.


(224) See, e.g. Smith, “Ethnicity and Culture,” on Nubia.


(226) See, for example, Mario A. S. Martin, Egyptian-Type Pottery in the Late Bronze Age Southern Levant (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 2011).

Bettina Bader
Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology, Austrian Academy of Sciences