

DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF MOBILITY AND MIGRATION DURING THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

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Abstract: For quite some time it has been assumed that during the Middle Kingdom there was a strong immigration from the Near East to Egypt. The explanatory models are based on many different concepts without being explicitly explained in most cases. This paper examines the question of migration in the early second millennium BCE by addressing existing cultural concepts and associating them with various aspects of mobility. For this consideration it is indispensable to work out and question the meaning of ethnicity and group identity, especially with regard to the period following the Middle Kingdom and the rule of the Hyksos in Egypt.

Keywords: Middle Kingdom; Middle Bronze Age Levant; mobility and migration; identity; the 'other'; demarcation

The intention of the following contribution is to bring together different aspects related to the issue of migration, which all play an essential part for a better understanding of cultural interaction and the associated mobility that has taken place. Some basic theoretical topics must be addressed before the specific situation of the Middle Kingdom can be dealt with. This is important, on the one hand, to make the use of certain terms and concepts understandable and, on the other hand, to provide a basis for a discussion on the interpretation of the material available. One question for instance, to be asked in connection with identity formation is whether ethnicity has actually played a major role within group identity during the Middle Kingdom. Judging from the sources available, this may not have been the case; rather, it is a modern concept that is closely linked to the idea of nation states.

Regarding the case study on Middle Kingdom Egypt, there are various aspects that need consideration. One topic that is addressed concerns the

significance of demarcation and the resulting understanding of 'otherness'. The underlying Egyptian understanding of belonging is extremely important for the interpretation of the written sources, since the texts are an essential testimony to contact with non-Egyptians. In addition, the written and archaeological evidence of the existence of immigrants during the Middle Kingdom will be used to investigate the question of their identity in Egypt. There are indications that Near Eastern people were welcome and integrated in Egypt, to the extent that they were able to participate in virtually all social and cultural spheres. This adaptation (even in the context of forced migration) probably contributed to the fact that the visibility of foreigners in the archaeological remains is relatively low.

State of research

Mobility is an important topic in current scholarship in social and cultural studies and includes an increasing number of research projects on human migration in premodern times. As varied as the different perspectives on the major topic of migration are, so are the approaches to dealing with this phenomenon. Historically, migration and mobility have been essential concepts in archaeological theory for explaining changes in patterns of material culture or its certain spatial distribution. Similarly, the idea of various ways of human mobility was used for a better understanding of demographic dynamics in general.

In the archaeological context, the association of specific geographical and temporal patterns in material culture with particular ethnic groups has led to the identification of major shifts in material culture with the movements of particular populations.² Underlying assumptions were that artefact assemblages are proxies for archaeological "cul-

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² KOSSINNA 1911, 3, 1926, 21; CHILDE 1926, 1929, 1950.

ture groups”³ and those groups are equatable with real entities. Material culture change and the mechanisms producing it (i.e. migration, diffusion and innovation) were included in the definition of change and migration itself – the notions were interchangeable.⁴

Proponents of processual archaeology in the 1960s and 1970s advocated an avoidance of migration as an explanatory model for certain patterns in the archaeological record. Instead, they viewed migration only as a descriptor of historical events.⁵ Explanations generally shifted towards internal social dynamics, for example, using systems theory or information exchange theory, but, in fact, this shift was at least partly due to the weakness in a proper methodological and theoretical basis for the archaeological interpretation.⁶ Research focused on universal mechanisms of change; migration as an external and unpredictable force was not admissible in this approach.

This mindset changed in Anglo-American archaeology, beginning in the 1980s, and migration was again applicable on a case-by-case basis.⁷ With the post-processual orientation, the socio-political contexts of archaeology were foregrounded and concepts of a wide array of European social theorists were highlighted.⁸ In response to the rigorous positivism and the sole emphasis on quantifiable models represented by processualists, the basis of post-processualism was the focus of the study of *meaning* and *agency* in archaeology.⁹ In the context of migration, for instance, Ian Hodder tried to move away from the basic concept of “pots equal people”. He suggested that the appearance of migration might be an ideological creation covering social change.¹⁰

During this time, engagement with the theoretical shifts in other fields, such as anthropology and sociology, were encouraged. This marks an impor-

tant step within the research of past migration, as the opportunities for joint development of these disciplines offers a great deal of added value for the study of migration by encompassing new methodologies, technological innovations and conceptual focus areas.

This development can be well observed in two areas of current migration research: on the one hand, identity research, which is closely linked to this topic and has already assumed a certain extent within archaeological subjects. In fact, it is impossible to deal with the question of migration without at least reflecting on different identities in the specific historical and cultural context. Based on the fundamental remarks of Fredrik Barth¹¹ and the subsequent anthropological tradition on ethnicity and specific ethnic groups, new approaches for archaeologists and historians have emerged for their internal interpretations.¹²

On the other hand, the implementation of bio-archaeological analyses within migration research has been getting more attention in the last decade.¹³ Here, too, the mutually supportive development of the disciplines involved is of great importance, both methodologically and theoretically.

Migration: A complex process

Two reasons are mainly responsible for the difficulties in analysing migratory processes. Firstly, there are always at least two sides of the story: the perspective of the society that receives migrants and the one where they come from. Depending on which perspective one takes, the perception also changes regarding the overall process. The particular political and economic situation and cultural conditions are different and cannot be easily analysed in relation to each other. Furthermore, partly motivated by the attitude to contemporary

³ For the ideas associated with archaeological culture, see e.g. SHENNAN 1994, 5–6.

⁴ E.g. PARKER 1916; KLUCKHOHN 1936; STEWARD 1940; or even decades later: CLARK 1970.

⁵ BINFORD 1965; ADAMS 1968; MYHRE and MYHRE 1972.

⁶ ADAMS et al. 1978, 1990, 896 f., 1997; CHAPMAN and HAMELROW 1997; BURMEISTER 2000.

⁷ E.g. ROUSE 1986; KRISTIANSEN 1989; ANTHONY 1990; CAMERON 1995; SNOW 1995.

⁸ Especially important sociological works: MARX 1964; BOURDIEU 1977; WEBER 1978, 1992; DURKHEIM 1984, 1995; GIDDENS 1979; MARX and ENGELS 1998.

⁹ E.g. HODDER 1986; SHANKS and TILLEY 1987; BELL 1992.

¹⁰ HODDER 1990, 305.

¹¹ BARTH 1969.

¹² Cf. e.g. SHENNAN 1994; JONES 1997; BRATHER 2004; DÍAZ-ANDREU et al. 2005; BURMEISTER and MÜLLER-SCHEESSEL 2006; POHL and MEHOFER 2010; CABANA and CLARK 2011; within Egyptology, see e.g. SMITH 2003, 2013; BADER 2013; MOERS 2000, 2015; SCHNEIDER 2003, 316–338, 2006; contributions in *Journal of Egyptian History* 11, SCHNEIDER 2018.

¹³ On the practical application of isotope and DNA analyses in the Egyptological migration-related context: KRINGS et al. 1999; DUPRAS and SCHWARCZ 2001; BUZON et al. 2007; MAARANEN et al. 2019b, 2019a; STANTIS and SCHUTKOWSKI 2019; see also the highly controversial debated study: SCHUENEMANN et al. 2017.

socio-political events, scholars form a subjective description of certain historical processes.

The second reason is the methodological difficulty in bringing together developments in the material culture over decades and centuries with the specific question of their relationship to a migratory movement. Even nowadays, with all the information available, this would be a most difficult task. The interpretation of material culture itself is already a complex matter, but historical migration researchers face a major dilemma when speaking about such a long period (up to several centuries).

Different ways to approach this topic have been suggested in the past. Some are more fruitful than others, but a final solution has not yet been found. One aspect to be emphasized at this point is a still recurrent problem. If the main reason for picking out migration is the search for an explanation for cultural change, there is a risk of following a culture-historical pattern of thinking without reflecting on it. The problem is that any sign of cultural change could be attributed to the influence of immigrants without considering other mechanisms, such as autonomous innovation or cultural contact without population exchange. The culture-historical explanatory model very quickly draws a connection between changes in material culture and the attribution of the people who have used it. The key, therefore, is to engage critically with this model to test its applicability on sufficient evidence. It has been on the table, at least since the seminal work of David W. Anthony,¹⁴ that migration itself must be examined as a phenomenon to possibly understand its role in cultural change in a further step. Therewith, Anthony is part of a more open and multifaceted research era in which different orientations can exist next to each other. His processual approach opened up a new discussion within migration research, and the identification of migration by means of processual methods is now quite common.¹⁵

Even if migration is not stated as a grand theory of change for human history, it is part of so many archaeological narratives that several assumptions cling to the way of thinking about the effect of migration on material. One needs to

reflect, again and again, if and how there is a relationship between the archaeological record and the phenomenon of migration. An ambivalent relationship can be felt as soon as the single processes related to migration are at stake. Migratory movements, as social processes, must be seen as responses to complex ecological, economic, political, religious, social and cultural conditions and challenges. Therefore, there will be no simple answer to the question of the interpretation of material culture regarding migration.

Types of migration

When one talks about the phenomenon of migration, it is helpful at first to define a certain categorization that is used. Depending on the research area and how one wants to approach the topic, different divisions come into question. A relatively often cited typology of migration systems is the one developed by Tilly,¹⁶ which was, for instance, adopted by Noy¹⁷ and refined by Anthony¹⁸ for their contexts. With time, concerns were raised about Tilly's framework, which was considered as incomplete and diffuse. The main problem with his categorization is the unlike quantities he used: local, circular, chain and career migration. Those four attributions refer to different features, namely space, time and mode of migration.

Therefore, Lesger et al. proposed a division in just three types that seemed to fit the archaeological purpose better.¹⁹ In this typology, the spatial criterion coincides with the geographical range: local, regional, international. The chronological one indicates the period during which the migration took place: temporary, circular, definitive. Finally, the modal one points to the way the migration was accomplished: through personal network, organizational or non-personal network, solitary.²⁰

Neither type of classification²¹ is intended to explain but describes migratory movements and should help to provide a framework for certain research questions. Of course, the individual criteria can also shift in the course of migration, as parameters such as space and time change their meaning and importance easily.

¹⁴ ANTHONY 1990.

¹⁵ BURMEISTER 2000; CLARK 2001; LYONS 2003; PRIEN 2005; TSUDA et al. 2015.

¹⁶ TILLY 1978.

¹⁷ NOY 2000.

¹⁸ ANTHONY 1997, 26–27.

¹⁹ LESGER et al. 2002.

²⁰ LESGER et al. 2002, 31.

²¹ TILLY 1978 and LESGER et al. 2002.

An interesting aspect of Tilly's typology is the link between two variables: the distance moved and the severity of the social cleavage that is created by the movement. He argued that regular/daily moves over short distances with minimal social breakage should be understood as *mobility* and, thus, not as part of *migration*. Consequently, *migration* only refers to movements over longer distances, including an essential amount of cleavage or even disruption.²² Although, from today's perspective, it becomes clear that certain forms of mobility are excluded (e.g. long-distance travel for recreational purposes), Tilly opened up an important aspect within migration research which is worth reflecting on.

Various considerations are connected to these classifications of migration. First of all, one will have to answer the question of which forms of mobility are regarded as actual migration in each closer investigation. The classification of (semi-) nomadic population groups for Egypt and the Near East is, thus, immediately put up for discussion. The relevant literature at least deals with it in different ways, which makes the problem visible.²³ However, in most cases, nomadism is omitted as a topic within the broader examination of migration.²⁴

Another interesting point is the consideration of the social cleavage linked to the migratory process. It can be assumed that distance will have played an important role, since the possibility of regular exchanges or even short-term stays in the home region alone makes a big difference. The notion that the further the distance, the higher the social cleavage, seems to oversimplify the situation. However, the reflection is not irrelevant, as the extent of a social rupture has a direct impact on cultural exchange and interaction between the regions involved. In the case of larger migratory movements or groups composed of individuals with high social status, a break in contacts also has consequences for trade and, thus, for the economic situation of the individual regions.

Both aspects, drawing the line between mobility and migration and the question of social cleavage, are relevant to the methodological approach and should, therefore, be taken into account.

The search for migration patterns

A sensible way of facing up to the complex questions of migration is a twofold orientation. On the one hand, as much information as possible should be collected that can be, but does not necessarily have to be, connected with migration; regardless of the type of source or the personal assessment of which data is considered more useful.

On the other hand, considerations should be formulated that are within the general framework of the typologies mentioned before, since some elements within the migration processes may not be reflected in the archaeological material. In the generally accepted assumption that migration does not necessarily have to leave material traces and that, in addition, traces left behind cannot always be discovered and recognized, a partly hypothetical-theoretical examination of the topic is not only recommendable but a necessity.

In connection with migration, basic assumptions are implied in many descriptions – of different periods and regions – which in part consciously, but very often also unconsciously, influence the interpretation of the respective results significantly. A good example of this is the use of the term *ethnicity*, which has been controversially discussed in the various disciplines in recent decades. If one wishes to speak of ethnicity in the context of migration, one's own opinion must be, at least briefly, revealed.²⁵ In order to be able to start a broad and constructive discourse, however, these thoughts and preconditions must be formulated and made available to the scholarly community.

Two common approaches should be briefly mentioned at this point, as they are problematic and, therefore, need some exposition. At first, the

²² TILLY 1978, 58.

²³ Cf. CRIBB 1991; BARNARD and WENDRICH 2008; SZUCHMAN 2009.

²⁴ A first attempt to draw attention to this under-illuminated aspect in the Egyptian Middle Kingdom context: PRIGLINGER 2019.

²⁵ Two broad directions exist in the Social Sciences: the 'primordialists' believe that one is born into an ethnicity (i.e. a given family, language, religion, etc.). The basic premise is

that these dispositions are widely unchangeable and inflexible. Opposed to this line of thought, there is an orientation that implies ethnicity as a relationship of alterity, which means with a more flexible nature. In this paper, the term is utilised in the spirit of the 'situationalists', who propose that individuals adapt their self-identification to specific situations when it is of use. Furthermore, ethnicity is also ascribed to groups or individuals in a way that may differ from their self-ascription.

‘pots equal people’²⁶ contention must be brought up, as different variations of it still provide the underlying basis for some explanatory models. The issue is that looking into the distribution of, for instance, pottery,²⁷ scarabs²⁸ or specific burial goods²⁹ cannot answer the question of ethnic groups’ origins. So, if the search for this is actually the research question, then distribution maps are certainly not the appropriate methodological approach.

Foremost, the question should be asked whether ethnicity plays such a major role within group identities, because this assumption obviously leads quite often directly to theories about migration. An important perspective that is not always considered is the diversity of identities which the migrating groups may have had, particularly in regions where different landscapes and lifestyles meet. Moreover, it is by no means certain that what initially appear to be social entities have had any conscious group identity.³⁰ For this reason, one must be very careful in the interpretation of the written and archaeological remains and perhaps think about whether the research question should not be put differently.

The second approach, less problematic, is the use of acculturation concepts for the study of cultural contact.³¹ The inherent understanding of culture in general makes it necessary to discuss this concept, since all migration theories are in some way related to cultures and their contacts with each other. The main point of criticism on acculturation concepts is the history of their application (imperialistic premises) and the mainly trait-driven, systemic view of acculturation in the archaeological context.³²

The original concept of acculturation (evolved in the Anglo-Saxon tradition of anthropology) focused on the reconstructions of cultural contact, through which social groups receive and assimilate

late elements from other groups/communities. One basic assumption regarding cultural evolution was that changes are brought about by the conjunction of two or more original, separate cultures. As a result, a dominated culture passively receives certain elements from the other, automatically resulting in the loss of its own cultural elements.³³ More recently, these studies were criticized because they are within the framework of European/Western colonialist ideals. The criticism expressed itself above all against the unidirectional conceived mechanisms of change.

Two problematic aspects that are often part of acculturation concepts are of particular interest for migration studies: firstly, the tendency to mix up changes in behaviour (or behavioural systems) with changes in identity. Secondly, the equation of culture traits with material culture and, thus, discernible changes in material culture over time are equated with acculturation.

Middle Kingdom Egypt and Migration from the Near East³⁴

What indications of Near Eastern people who migrated to Egypt can be put forward for the Middle Kingdom? The most important source is initially the texts, which give either a contemporary or retrospective impression of the situation. Before this question can be answered, however, some partial aspects in connection with the way in which Egyptians dealt with the ‘other-ness’ should be explained.

Egyptian demarcation

Regarding an assumed general attitude of demarcation, the following observations are essential for a study of migration to Egypt: firstly, the distinction between *topos* and *mimesis* in the depiction of

²⁶ This concept was originally developed in the school of thought associated with culture-historical and primordialist approaches. Cf. for an overview of culture-history: JONES 1997, 15–29.

²⁷ MCGOVERN 2000.

²⁸ E.g. BEN-TOR 2007, 190–192, 2009; WEINSTEIN 1981, 1991, 107 f.

²⁹ One has to keep in mind that the burial’s context is special in terms of spiritual meaning (and the intention behind features and practices), but the assumption that a certain burial object can be traced regionally and through time to locate a practice’s origin and an associated migratory

movement is a variation of the “pots equal people” contention. See e.g. for the finding of weapons in burials, PRELL 2019.

³⁰ Well elaborated, for instance, in the case of Late Bronze/Early Iron Ages western Anatolia: MACSWEENEY 2009.

³¹ For the application within Egyptology: SCHNEIDER 2006, 2010, 144–146; KOUSOULIS 2012; SMITH 2015 [1998].

³² See e.g. CHEEK 1974; FOWLER 1987, 6–8; WILSON and ROGERS 1993, 3–4; CUSICK 2015; SAUNDERS 2015, 417–423.

³³ E.g. REDFIELD et al. 1936; HERSKOVITS 1937; MASON 1955.

³⁴ All region designations mentioned are meant geographically – explicitly not nationally.

the ‘others’ in Egyptian literature and art.³⁵ Loprieno made clear that the *foreigner-topos* serves a rhetorical goal within the ideological sphere. It is to be understood as a timeless constant of the Egyptian presentation of strangers and their land.³⁶ These representations on monuments and texts were part of a conscious construction of an (ethnic) ‘other’. On the other hand, there is mimesis, reflected in sources with a more favourable perspective, probably demonstrating positive (more realistic?) cultural encounters.³⁷ Therefore, it is important to distinguish between the two spheres in the context of migration and the question of perception of the ‘other’.

Secondly, Assmann demonstrated that it was not the state (or the territory ruled by the Egyptian king) but the individual home town that prompted a sense of belonging.³⁸ This observation is based on the strong linkage between burial and homeland, which is connected with the fact that the home town is supposed to be the place of one’s own grave, but that the graves for which one is responsible as a descendant are also located there.³⁹ Assmann’s explanation is of interest, as the self-ascription to a certain group or area is crucial for the demarcation from the ‘other’ and, thus, the typical manifestation of strangeness would be seen in someone who is unfamiliar with the hometown.⁴⁰

Accordingly, Schneider argues that “Neither from the internal perception of the Egyptian nor from the external perception of the immigrant was non-Egyptian origin seen as a framework of group identity and solidarity.” Thus, the definition of ethnic identities in Egypt proceeded on a smaller

scale.⁴¹ If ethnic identities persevered in Egypt, they defined themselves on a smaller scale.

Ethnonyms and toponyms offer indications of certain group descriptions and regional demarcation. They usually remain in use for quite a long period of time, which means that the semantics and morphological patterns could have changed significantly during this time. In addition to various difficulties in terms of attribution, such as the influence of other languages or changes in the meaning over time, another hitch is the preconception of the absolute local stability of toponyms and the steady correlation between ethnic identities and ethnonyms.⁴² Names of places and peoples may change for several reasons, which is why toponyms and ethnonyms must be evaluated within the context of the single periods of attestation.⁴³

In this context, the most essential Egyptian term for this topic is *ʕm* (*ʕm.t*, *ʕm.w*), commonly translated with *Asiatic(s)*.⁴⁴ The development of *ʕmw.w* from the Old to the Middle Kingdom is interesting for the historical reconstruction based on the written sources. In the Old Kingdom, the term is a phylonym or ethnonym designating a distinct Semitic tribe/people, which originated in the Negev region,⁴⁵ but in the Middle Kingdom, *ʕm.w* had disappeared as a distinct ethnic identity and was used for all kinds of Asiatic people(s), regardless of their specific origins.⁴⁶ Gundacker explained recently that during the Old Kingdom, *ʕmw.w* left their homeland (probably also connected to climate change) and, subsequently, different branches occupied particular regions (the Sinai Peninsula, northern Levant [*hnt-š*, *t-ʕmw.w*], *hš.t-ʕmw.w*, *d3tj*). Concerning the

³⁵ LOPRIENO 1988.

³⁶ LOPRIENO 1988, 22–34.

³⁷ See for Loprieno’s understanding: LOPRIENO 1988, 11 f.

³⁸ ASSMANN 1996.

³⁹ ASSMANN 1996, 87–91; see also: MOERS 2003.

⁴⁰ On the link with language identification in the regional context, see MOERS 2000, esp. 59–80.

⁴¹ SCHNEIDER 2010, 145.

⁴² GUNDACKER 2017, 334, note 5 with a comparative example of Avars and Huns.

⁴³ Gundacker demonstrated well how important it may be to differentiate between terms referring to distinct classifications, such as ethnonyms *stricto sensu* (names of peoples with common identity), laonyms (names of peoples), genonyms (names of races and groups of related peoples or tribes), phylonyms (names of tribes and subdivisions of peoples), etc. Additionally, the differentiation between endonyms (names which are proper self-designations and

which are commonly recognized as such by the people to whom the name is applied, although they need not be their own creations or derive from their own language) or exonyms (names which are used by neighbouring peoples in order to designate another people and which – regardless of their language of origin – are not used by the designated people themselves). GUNDACKER 2017, 336–342.

⁴⁴ Of course, this auxiliary translation is only meant geographically and does not reflect the ancient Egyptian perception of their neighbours. Cf. in detail: SCHNEIDER 2003, 5–81.

⁴⁵ SCHNEIDER 1997, 195 f. (14.); SCHNEIDER 2003, 5; GUNDACKER 2017, 349 f., Fig. 13.1.

⁴⁶ Cf. HANNIG 2006, 486 f.; GUNDACKER 2017, 346–352, Fig. 13.1, n. 28; see e.g. for *ʕmw* in the Story of Sinuhe: KOCH 1990; and for the topos of the *ʕmw* as the prototypical non-Egyptian: FISCHER 1976, 97 f.; LOPRIENO 1988, 41–59; BAINES 1996; MORENZ 1997; FELBER 2005.

Middle Kingdom, he recognized a movement to *t3-ʕ3mw.w* near Ullaza and probably another one to *d3tj*, the eastern desert.⁴⁷ It can be assumed that the regions closest to Egypt, which means the Sinai, the area north of the eastern desert and maybe also parts of the Negev and the southernmost parts of the southern Levant, were inhabited by different peoples. This already mixed cultural and ethnic landscape provides the basis for the immigration during the early second millennium BCE and, with this in mind, it becomes clear that one needs to be careful with assumptions about migratory movements of the *ʕ3mw.w* and the only too much associated Egyptian attitude towards ‘Asiatics’ in general.

The second most significant designation in the context of north-eastern people is *St.t* (and *St.tyw* for the people). Moreover, it can occur in relation to the ethnonym *ʕ3mw.w*.⁴⁸ Interestingly, attestations of *St.t* also point in the direction of changeable region designations. *St.t* is one of the earliest terms associated with the region north-east of Egypt, however, *St.t* can neither be identified with a particular region nor *St.tyw* with a particular group.⁴⁹ The re-examination of the use from the Early Dynastic Period to the Middle Kingdom by Mourad offers new observations relating the term’s development.⁵⁰

During the Early Dynastic Period, *St.t* as either an alien region or town was a source of fine products. In the artistic context, it seems that *St.ty* reflected an ideological expression presented with the typical elements for an Asiatic figure. In the course of the Old Kingdom, the royal dominance over the ‘other’ was the primary connotation and there are distinct associations with the *Mntw*, the Sinai and the Levant. Finally, in the Middle Kingdom, *St.t* also encompasses regions such as *ꜥkmm*, *Rtnw* and *Iw3*, and groups, such as the *Mntw*. The attestations are connected with both hostile and commercial expeditions (Sinai, Levant) and most of them present a topos of the negative treatment of people of other origins. Artistically,

no difference between *St.tyw* and other Asiatics can be noted.⁵¹

Mourad concludes that by the end of the Middle Kingdom, *St.t* included the Sinai, the southern Levant and the northern Levant but was not merely a toponym. Instead, it can be interpreted as the ideological north-eastern entity (with the *St.tyw* as the ideological inhabitants) that also served as an abstraction for an alien entity that was encountered beyond Egypt’s north-east border.⁵² In this context, it is important to note that the term *St.tyw* not functioning as an ethnonym probably included different ethnic groups. Thus, the mixed cultural and ethnic landscape especially at the north-eastern border or contact zone becomes even more evident.

Asiatic presence

For the early second millennium BCE, the written sources do not only prove that Asiatics were present, but even in comparison with the preserved testimonies from the Old Kingdom, a clear increase in references to this is to be noted.⁵³ This refers to non-Egyptians as a whole and not only to individuals from the Near East. Historically, this fact can be, first and foremost, connected with Egypt’s intensified external relationships regarding the Levant⁵⁴ and, to the south, with the conquest of Lower Nubia to the south of the second cataract.⁵⁵

The strengthened relationship with the Levant certainly made it easier and more common to travel in both directions.⁵⁶ In fact, people of north-eastern origin are represented in many different professions and social milieus during the Middle Kingdom. People with non-Egyptian names can be found from prisoners who have been used for forced labour to domestic servants to high ranking officials in the Egyptian administration, even within the royal house.⁵⁷ It is also noteworthy that there have been individual cases in which a professional tradition within families is attested (in the

⁴⁷ GUNDACKER 2017, 351 f., n. 28.

⁴⁸ MOURAD 2015, 194–199, Figs. 7.8–7.9.

⁴⁹ See for different views – Sinai: ČERNÝ 1955, 2; SOWADA 2009, 31; Levant: WRIGHT 1985, 248, 250; broader region incorporating the Sinai and the southern Levant: GODRON 1990, 194; SOWADA 2009, 31.

⁵⁰ MOURAD 2017.

⁵¹ MOURAD 2017, 304.

⁵² MOURAD 2017, 301–305, Tab. 3.

⁵³ Cf. comprehensive: SCHNEIDER 2003.

⁵⁴ HELCK 1971; WARD 1971; COHEN 2002, 2012.

⁵⁵ ZIBELIUS-CHEN 1988, 185–197; MEURER 1996; SMITH 2003, 75–78; TÖRÖK 2009, 79–102.

⁵⁶ On some aspects of travel, see KÖPP-JUNK 2017.

⁵⁷ POSENER 1957; LUFT 1993; SCHNEIDER 2003, 201–290.

field of military and police, as well as metal-work).⁵⁸

Additionally, literary text sources indicate the presence of Asiatics in Egypt also in the context of military actions during the Middle Kingdom.⁵⁹ Even if these written records are, of course, not to be understood as historical reports, they must not be dismissed as pure propaganda. To a certain extent, they may well be seen as a reflection of social and political concerns. In addition, other text sources also point to military conflicts that probably took place on Egyptian and Levantine soil.⁶⁰

The southern Levant drew Egypt's attention during the reign of Amenemhet II, which is mirrored in the Mit Rahina inscription.⁶¹ One aim of the activities was to capture workers for the king's pyramid city, while others were given to Egypt as a tribute. Whether there were several such procurement measurements in the Levant during the Middle Kingdom is not known. In any case, the great political and economic interest in the Levant is also attested by the inscription in the tomb of Khnumhotep in Dahshur (Amenemhet III).⁶²

Regarding the employment situation, the Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446 from the reign of Sobekhotep III⁶³ and the Sinai inscriptions, which prove the participation of Asiatics in mine work under Amenemhet III and IV, are of interest above all.⁶⁴ The institution called *hnr.t wr* 'great enclosure',⁶⁵ which is mentioned in the Papyrus Brooklyn, organized corvée work throughout Egypt. A list of names in this papyrus demonstrates the high number of Asiatics amongst this working population. Furthermore, it is mentioned that the deployment of Asiatic workers was not confined to the residence and its surroundings but extended to private property in the province.

The picture that emerges is that the population of Egypt during the Middle Kingdom was probably quite diverse and, in addition to the natives,

numerous people (of different generations) from the Levant, Nubia, Libya, and the desert and marginal zones lived in the Delta and the Nile valley. It has been known since Schneider that immigrants appear in the written sources predominantly no differently than Egyptian natives. Significant criteria for their different origins are no longer available or not recognisable and the persons concerned do not provide us with biographical information on this process.⁶⁶

As a rule, ethnonyms appear only as external markers and not as conscious signs of self-attribution,⁶⁷ which plays a major role in the interpretation of group membership. Regarding marriage behaviour, the complexity and, thus, the difficulty of responding to ethnicity could also be determined based on the analysis of about 100 cases. Marriage between two individuals with non-Egyptian names is very rarely documented, although it can be assumed that it would have taken place more frequently.⁶⁸ To the extent that our knowledge of the geographical origin of the people examined and the written tradition permits, it should be noted that the marriage of Egyptian males to women with non-Egyptian names was more frequent than the marriage of Egyptian females to men with non-Egyptian names.⁶⁹ In this context, however, it should also be considered that the male perspective was usually adopted in written records.

Live and die in Egypt

When assessing the living situation of Egyptians together with people of initially different geographical origin, it should, firstly, be noted that the archaeological settlement remains are not particularly significant due to their number, size and the difficulties of ethnic interpretation. It is methodically delicate to divide them into groups of specific residential areas, which does not mean that such areas did not exist.⁷⁰ Written evidence, for exam-

⁵⁸ SCHNEIDER 2003, 33, 246, 307, 334.

⁵⁹ QUIRKE 2004, 112–120, 140–150; PARKINSON 2010.

⁶⁰ Cf. e.g. the stela inscription of Khu-Sobek which records an early war of Egypt with its north-eastern neighbours: PEET 1914; BAINES 1987.

⁶¹ ALTENMÜLLER and MOUSSA 1991; MARCUS 2007.

⁶² ALLEN 2008.

⁶³ HAYES 1972 [1955]; MENU 2012. The document spans a period from Amenemhet III to Sobekhotep III (about 90 years).

⁶⁴ ČERNÝ 1935; GARDINER et al. 1952–55; SCHNEIDER 2003, 246 f.

⁶⁵ Maybe also attested by archaeological evidence: ŚLIWA 2005.

⁶⁶ SCHNEIDER 2003, 322.

⁶⁷ SCHNEIDER 2003, 334 f.

⁶⁸ FRANKE 1983; SCHNEIDER 2003, 291–314.

⁶⁹ SCHNEIDER 2003, 292, 334 f.

⁷⁰ Bietak, for instance, has conducted a residential area analysis for the Middle Kingdom and the Hyksos period in Tell el-Dab'a/Ezbet Rushdi. Cf. BIETAK 2018.

ple, suggests that there have been separate settlements for ꜥ3mw. From the time of Senwosret II, the Illahun Papyri mentions large numbers of ꜥ3mw who were located near the 12th Dynasty residence *Jtj-t3wj*, near Lisht in so-called *wnw.t*.⁷¹ Those ꜥ3mw lived in *wnw.t* installations and were servants or workmen. Perhaps it can be assumed that these installations were specific settlements of ꜥ3mw, surrounded by enclosure walls, which is indicated by the usual determinative of ‘crenellated circular wall’.⁷² However, there is no indication of where these ꜥ3mw came from and how long they stayed in the settlements. One possibility could be that they were captives brought to Egypt by expeditions or campaigns during the Middle Kingdom.⁷³ The question arises whether voluntary immigrants lived in *wnw.t*. If such settlements were commissioned by the Egyptian crown and not built by Asiatics, the settling of captives seems more plausible, but there is no clear indication of the origin of the *wnw.t*. On the other hand, it might also be possible that immigrant individuals or smaller groups were assigned to *wnw.t* installations after a kind of border control. There could have been fortifications intended for this purpose in the Delta’s peripheral zone. Installations called *inbw hꜥ3* ‘walls of the ruler’, which are known only from written sources,⁷⁴ are said to have been built in the north-eastern Delta in the early 12th Dynasty.⁷⁵ If they existed, it is conceivable that these installations were used especially in the ear-

ly Middle Kingdom not only for monitoring the traders and their activities but also to control the number of ꜥ3m.w and *St.tyw* immigrating into the Delta.⁷⁶

Other political measures related to ꜥ3mw.w are suspected within the administration and the military – possibly for reasons of language. The existence of a separate administrative unit for ꜥ3mw.w may be derived from specific titles such as *sh3w nj ꜥ3mw.w* ‘scribe of the ꜥ3mw.w’⁷⁷ and *jmj-r3 mšꜥ nj ꜥ3mw.w* ‘commander/officer of ꜥ3mw.w’.⁷⁸ A separate unit for the military sector has been assumed for some time based on titles such as *mr mšꜥ n ꜥ3mw* ‘Chief of staff of the ꜥ3mw’.⁷⁹

Only Tell el-Dab’a comes into play for settlement archaeological investigations in the eastern Delta, in order to approach the presence of Asiatics.⁸⁰ Beyond that, the archaeological evidence of the presence of people from the Near East is actually limited. More remains of typical Middle Bronze Age (MBA) material in the eastern Delta can be noted in the Hyksos reign, but it looks much thinner for the time before.⁸¹ One reason for this might be the lack of published evidence for some sites in the eastern Delta.⁸² However, the question arises as to which numbers of inhabitants and people from the Near East among them are to be assumed. Estimates may be quite difficult,⁸³ but the MBA material in the Middle Kingdom – apart from Tell el-Dab’a – raise doubts about a large mass of immigrants.

⁷¹ Papyrus Berlin 10021 found at Lahun, SCHARFF 1924, 45 f.; DRIOTON 1943, 488, n. 2; HELCK 1971, 80; BIETAK 1994, 18–20; FISCHER 1959, 264.

⁷² For the development and attestation of *wnw.t* during the Old Kingdom, see: GUNDACKER 2017, 361–372.

⁷³ See for relevant Egyptian activities in the Levant: POSENER 1957, 157 f.; Click or tap here to enter text. ALTENMÜLLER and MOUSSA 1991; GOEDICKE 1991; MARCUS 2007; ALTENMÜLLER 2015, 28 f., 67–82, 116–120.

⁷⁴ The first occurrence is found in the *Prophecy of Neferti*: HELCK 1970, 56 f. The second time the “Walls of the Ruler” are mentioned is in the *Tale of Sinuhe*: PARKINSON 1997, 28.

⁷⁵ For the possibility of archaeological evidence for an Egyptian fortification system at the route between Egypt and the Levant, see HOFFMEIER 2006.

⁷⁶ Aaron de Souza drew my attention to the possible comparison with the fortresses in Lower Nubia, which were probably built to control the trade and movements of people. However, this control does not automatically mean that all people have actually been registered. There will always have been ways to get around them.

⁷⁷ KAPLONY-HECKEL 1971, 3, 5 f.

⁷⁸ DARNELL et al. 2005, 87 f.; see GUNDACKER 2017, 371.

⁷⁹ WARD 1982, 29 [206]; CHEVEREAU 1991, 56 (105).

⁸⁰ The site was identified with ancient Avaris. See HABACHI 1954, 443–448; BIETAK 1975, 179–221.

⁸¹ Tell el-Habwa (late 13th Dynasty onwards): ABD EL-MAKSOUUD 1983; ABD EL-MAKSOUUD and VALBELLE 2005; see MOURAD 2015, 44–48. Tell el-Yahudiyah: NAVILLE and GRIFFITH 1890; PETRIE 1906; ADAM 1958; TUFNELL 1977; see MOURAD 2015, 57–61; Kom el-Hisn in the western Delta: HAMADA and EL-AMIR 1947; KIRBY et al. 1998; see MOURAD 2015, 49 f.

⁸² For instance, for the Wadi Tumilat, which would be due to its location between the Delta and the Sinai Peninsula an extremely important source. See MOURAD 2015, 19.

⁸³ Bietak estimated the presence of Canaanites in Egypt (with focus on the Eastern Delta and the Lisht region) at 30000 for the 18th and 17th centuries. See BIETAK 1988, 39, n. 34.

The settlement at Tell el-Dab'a in the early 12th Dynasty can be called *typically* Egyptian, with just a few imports.⁸⁴ Later on (late 12th/13th Dynasty), traces of new elements in the archaeological record may potentially be related to the immigration of people from the Near East, comprehensible as a gradual process.⁸⁵ During the early to mid-13th Dynasty, exact imitations of previously imported pottery also occurred. However, whether these imitations can actually be seen as an indication of immigrants who have brought their way of producing pottery with them must probably be determined by the number of existing examples.⁸⁶ A large part of the evidence of Levantine MBA material comes from burial contexts of that time.⁸⁷ Even though the assessment of this material in terms of the people behind it is difficult and complex, it can at least be said that part of the material culture is similar to that of the MBA Levant and beyond, which opens up assumptions regarding immigrants in Tell el-Dab'a. Among the MBA elements of burial customs are donkey burials, specific weapons, personal adornment (toggle pins, metal belts), intramural interments, or supine body position with flexed legs. In any case, the burials alone cannot be used to identify immigrants. Burials are complex ritualized practices that may not directly mirror the social or economic, let alone ethnic status of individuals.⁸⁸ Their significance is not to be underestimated though. The character of the burial is decided upon solely by the living members of the community and, therefore, expresses their idea of a good afterlife. If certain members of a group decided to bury another individual in a specific (untypical Egyptian) manner, one can assume that this practice is a manifestation of identification. Nevertheless, the assumption

of a greater presence of people from the Near East in Egypt can only be substantiated by the combination of funerary traditions with other links to this region such as the pottery or architecture already mentioned.⁸⁹

Along with the written sources mentioned on the general presence of *ꜥm.w* and *St.tyw*, it can be assumed that population groups from various regions settled in Tell el-Dab'a in the course of the Middle Kingdom. Immigration is conceivable on a somewhat larger scale only for the advanced 13th dynasty. However, the Egyptian population always accounted for a certain proportion of the inhabitants.⁹⁰

As the thorough investigation of the late Middle Kingdom settlement at Tell el-Dab'a has shown, it is probably not possible to speak of an elite in area A/II as far as the inhabitants are concerned.⁹¹ Bader states that the developments in the different areas and phases of the site need to be separated and should not be thrown together. Even if the exact assessment of the inhabitants' social position cannot be satisfactorily clarified, the evidence seems to indicate that they did not belong to the poorest stratum of society, but the remains of settlements and finds do not indicate the wealth of an elite (layout and size of buildings).⁹² This is in a certain contrast to the funerary context, where there are at least some examples which, judging by the burial equipment, suggest a higher social status.

A further district in late Middle Kingdom Tell el-Dab'a is also assigned to a quite wealthy population in area F/I.⁹³ The thorough examination by Müller emphasized the important role of the site as a trade hub and melting pot, predestined for a culturally mixed atmosphere and good chances of upward social mobility.

⁸⁴ CZERNY 1999.

⁸⁵ Settlement in Area A/II, local Phases H, G/4 and G/3-1. BIETAK 1977; BADER 2015, forthcoming. See for an overview of disputable things in the context of Levantine-Egyptian contacts in the early 2nd millennium: SPARKS 2004.

⁸⁶ See for a detailed discussion: BADER 2011; BADER 2013, 271–275.

⁸⁷ BIETAK 1991a; BIETAK 1991b; PHILIP 2006; FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2008; SCHIESTL 2009; for a summary analysis: BIETAK 2010.

⁸⁸ E.g. PARKER PEARSON 1999; EGGERT 2001, 273–296; PORTER and BOUTIN 2014; BURMEISTER 2016, 47, 51.

⁸⁹ For Egypt untypical architecture in Tell el-Dab'a already before the 15th Dynasty: middle-room house in Area F/I

(Phase H, late 12th Dynasty) BIETAK 1996, Figs. 8–9; sacred architecture: BIETAK 2010, 142–144, 154–156; BIETAK 2019 (Broad-Room temple in Area F/I, Broad-Room temple (Temple III) in Area A/II (Phase F, rebuilt in E/3 and continuously used later on), Bent-Axis temple at the western edge of the sacred precinct (Phases E/3 and then E/2).

⁹⁰ BADER forthcoming; also for the Hyksos period, see BIETAK 2016.

⁹¹ See the not yet published monograph by Bettina Bader: BADER forthcoming.

⁹² BADER forthcoming, Chapter 1 Introduction and on considerations of social strata during the Middle Kingdom: RICHARDS 2005, esp. 49–74.

⁹³ MÜLLER 2015, forthcoming.

Some historical considerations

A look at the historical development and the role of the migratory movements mentioned above raises a number of questions. Two particularly relevant connections will be discussed here since they are often brought into play: the significance of the Amorites and the link to the Hyksos. Both cases are as interesting as they are enigmatic. To anticipate the result right away, there are no simple, unambiguous answers to these complex questions. However, certain plausibilities can be presented that are important for further debate.

Amorites: “guilty of all charges”

Reading about the Amorites gives the impression that they can be held responsible for almost everything, both at the end of the third millennium and at the beginning of the second millennium BCE.⁹⁴ The essential question in this context seems to be who brought about the social transformations at the Early/MBA transition. The underlying assumption, which basically provides the orientation of an interpretation, refers to the main trigger for cultural/social change. The idea that exogenous factors are primarily responsible for cultural disruptions and innovations may be closely connected to cultural-historical concepts of diffusion and migration.

Amorites were frequently understood as migrating groups, carriers of a Syrian MBA material culture, responsible for the emergence of urbanism in the southern Levant.⁹⁵ Moreover, some scholars assumed that the Amorites triggered the destruction of the urbanized EBA III

culture and later EBA IV pastoral-nomadic population.⁹⁶

This view changed when numerous typological studies painted a complex and, above all, regionally differentiated picture.⁹⁷ Positions in the argumentation for a connection between migrating population groups and changes in material culture have shifted considerably also due to the renewed chronological debate.⁹⁸ Again or still, the Amorites (partly understood as an ethnic group with an inflexible nature) are attributed an essential role on the stage of politics in the Levant, which also connects them to the situation during the Middle Kingdom in Egypt.⁹⁹ In fact, there were earlier approaches in the search for possible scenarios for the Hyksos seizing power which were associated with the Amorites.¹⁰⁰

Amorite ethnicity is not equal to Amorite language,¹⁰¹ which is also a crucial observation in connection to the Egyptian execration texts, but even if there had been a distinct language group, it does not mean that this would be equatable to a social group.¹⁰²

The problem with ethnicity in the context of migration is that it takes on political and social meaning only when it is linked to drawing boundaries between dominant groups and minorities.¹⁰³ In connection with the Amorite identity,¹⁰⁴ two conceptions seem to play a role once again. At first, the link between the written attestations of Amorites and specific material culture. Secondly, the understanding of Amorites as a unified socio-political group, also acting in a united militarily movement.¹⁰⁵ The former is problematic since there is still no archaeological record that could be certainly associated with Amorites. At the

⁹⁴ For various notions of Amorites through time, see LIVERANI 1973; KAMP and YOFFEE 1980; WHITING 1995; HOMSHER and CRADIC 2017.

⁹⁵ E.g. ALBRIGHT 1922, 1965; WRIGHT 1957; KAPLAN 1971; ILAN 1995; BURKE 2014a.

⁹⁶ E.g. KENYON 1957, 1966; DE VAUX 1970; DEVER et al. 1970.

⁹⁷ E.g. GERSTENBLITH 1983; DEVER 1987; FALCONER and SAVAGE 1995; STAGER 2001; COHEN 2009, 2016.

⁹⁸ See MORANDI BONACOSI 2008, 61–63; REGEV et al. 2012; HÖFLMAYER et al. 2014; HÖFLMAYER 2017; PFÄLZNER 2017; SCHWARTZ 2017.

⁹⁹ BURKE 2014a, 2014b, 2017; SARETTA 2016, 17; BIETAK 2018, 78–81.

¹⁰⁰ VAN SETERS 1966, 192 f.

¹⁰¹ DE BOER 2014, 42 f.; see also DURAND 2012 on the idea of a language continuum that means Amorite is part of a varie-

ty of Semitic languages that are mutually intelligible. An ‘Amorite language’ is actually a scholars’ creation.

¹⁰² BARTH 1969; EMBERLING 1997; BAHRANI 2006; .

¹⁰³ BRETTELL 2003; CASTLES and MILLER 2009, 35–37.

¹⁰⁴ See for aspects of identity negotiation and interaction in the late 3rd/early 2nd millennium BCE: BURKE 2014a, 2017; also: SCHWARTZ 2013.

¹⁰⁵ See HOMSHER and CRADIC 2017, 260, naming the problem and offering an alternative view: “(…) the indigenous populations of the southern Levant were primarily responsible for the local innovations of the MB that transformed the social, technological, economic, demographic and political landscape of the region. The changes throughout all Levantine society associated with the MB were in fact gradual, mainly continuous and bear few indications of cultural diffusion from outside the Levant.”

moment when there is no clearly assignable material culture and, simultaneously, conspicuous changes over large periods of time and different regions are, nevertheless, repeatedly associated with the Amorites mentioned in texts,¹⁰⁶ the actual significance of what is generally referred to as MBA culture becomes blurred. In fact, it is not possible to link any category of Levantine MBA material culture specifically to any exogenous group.¹⁰⁷ Of course, this does not automatically mean that Amorites and other groupings may not have played an essential role in the Levant and beyond. Arguing in this direction, clear statements on the assessment of the written and archaeological remains must be made based on a theoretical framework. However, theories relying on ethnicity as an explanatory concept for changes in the MBA are debatable.

Hyksos:¹⁰⁸ “all but no invasion”

There has been a lot of speculation in the past about the origin of the Hyksos. The initial hypothesis, based above all on Manetho’s text passages,¹⁰⁹ assumed that there was an invasion. Other written sources used include non-contemporaneous Egyptian texts.¹¹⁰ The assumptions ranged from an origin in the Elamite region to Levantine to Indo-Aryan connections.¹¹¹ A little later, the supposition of Hurrian elements in the material culture was especially favoured.¹¹²

In the course of time, however, Manetho’s history was viewed more sceptically and the idea of an invasion was largely refused.¹¹³ The theories changed or were further developed particularly since the excavations at Tell el-Dab’a, the Hyksos

capital, revealed an abundance of new material.¹¹⁴ In addition to the resulting focus on the connection with the Levantine MBA culture,¹¹⁵ the assumed mechanisms of the Hyksos’ accession are of special interest in this paper’s context.

Even though some researchers are still in favour of the theory of an invasion,¹¹⁶ common explanations tend towards a gradual and mainly non-violent development. Some scholars assume that the Hyksos gained power in a gradual and peaceful way, facilitated by a north-eastern population already resident in Egypt.¹¹⁷ Another scenario that is brought into play is the gradual but forced take over (for instance, through a revolt) of the rule during the 13th Dynasty.¹¹⁸

What, however, is the assumption behind the hypothesis that Asiatics present everywhere in Upper and Lower Egypt finally made the basis for the seizure of power possible? Schneider argues that there is no reason to believe in a united Asiatic interest and considers the networking between the individual groups of Asiatics living in Egypt to be unlikely.¹¹⁹

What should be pointed out is that even if the Hyksos are of a different origin than the north-eastern population already living in Egypt, the latter need not necessarily have resisted the seizure of power. Arguments seem to be far too associated with the assumed ethnic identity. The following two options are, therefore, practically ignored: firstly, the possibility that, regardless of their origin, the population in the eastern Delta did not oppose the accession of non-Egyptians, since the political situation at that time welcomed any new guidance. Secondly, it may be even more likely that a small group of local residents decided to

¹⁰⁶ Cf. esp. for the early Old Babylonian Period: DE BOER 2014.

¹⁰⁷ HOMSHER and CRADIC 2017.

¹⁰⁸ In this paper *Hyksos* is only used for the kings who took the title *ḥkꜣw ḥꜣswt*, not for (a) people behind it. The problematic of the general use of this designation has already been criticized by: VAN SETERS 1966, 3.

¹⁰⁹ Manetho, *Aegyptiaca*, Figs. 42–44. Translation in WADDELL 2004, 77–93.

¹¹⁰ First stela of Kamose: GARDINER 1916; LACAU 1939; SMITH and SMITH 1976; GARDINER and PEEBLES 1992; second stela of Kamose: HABACHI 1972; inscription of Hatshepsut at Speos Artemidos: Urk. IV, 390 [35–39]; literary story about the quarrel between Apophis and Seqenenra: pSallier I, recto 1.1–3.3, verso 2–3; GARDINER 1932, 85–89; GOEDICKE 1986; the 400 year stela: MONTET 1933.

¹¹¹ TOMKINS 1890; MASPERO 1901, 161; LABIB 1936; ENGBERG 1939, 42.

¹¹² WARD 1961, 137 f.; BECKERATH 1964, 115–122; HELCK 1971, 101–103.

¹¹³ SAVE-SÖDERBERGH 1951; ALT 1961; VAN SETERS 1966, 181–190.

¹¹⁴ Cf. for the impact of the discovery of Tell el-Dab’a on the portrayal of the Hyksos (also in popular fiction): SCHNEIDER 2018.

¹¹⁵ See recent summaries: BIETAK 2006, 2010; MOURAD 2015.

¹¹⁶ E.g. REDFORD 1992, 101–113; RYHOLT 1997, 302–304; WILKINSON 2010, 184–188.

¹¹⁷ LEPSIUS 1852, 98 f.; HAYES 1972, 149; more recent: BIETAK 1994, 1996, 2010; BOOTH 2005, 9–20; MOURAD 2015, 215 f.; SARETTA 2016, 191 f.

¹¹⁸ E.g. KNAPP 1988, 168–170; QUIRKE 1991; an eventually violent takeover is presumed by: GRIMAL 1988, 186.

¹¹⁹ SCHNEIDER 1998, 1 f., 2003, 339–341, 2006, 203.

take the lead, regardless of origin, without any real opposition. This means that the Hyksos were formed from people living in Egypt who, in the course of their newly created power potential, (ideologically and/or religiously) claimed their non-Egyptian background. This circumstance does not have to contradict a far-reaching adaptation to Egyptian customs and lifestyle that took place previously.

The fact that the designation *ḥkꜣw ḥꜣswt* was not used by the Egyptian side for the 15th Dynasty, but the Hyksos themselves took on this title is also interesting in this regard.¹²⁰ Candelora hypothesizes that the conscious use of this title would not only proclaim their geographical origin but perhaps also an Amorite affiliation. The adoption of the title *ḥkꜣw ḥꜣswt*, which was in use, would, thus, be an attempt to negotiate their strange identity from an Egyptian perspective.¹²¹ In the sense of a flexible and situational self-identification, the proximity to so-called Amorite rulers could have been of political importance during the mid-second millennium BCE. However, this link has not yet been clearly demonstrated.

Conclusion

What can be summarized about migratory movements, especially into the Delta from Egypt's north-eastern neighbour region, during the Middle Kingdom? Migration took place and there are both written and archaeological sources pointing to it. According to the textual evidence, there were a much larger number of 'Asiatics' in Egypt than during the Old Kingdom. It is possible that the descendants of those *ꜣmw.w* who infiltrated into the regions to the east of Egypt during the 6th Dynasty (and probably later) may have still be there, also called *ꜣmw.w.*, inhabiting the eastern desert (as far south as the Wadi Hammamat road) during the Middle Kingdom.¹²² Additionally, an inscription in the Wadi el-Hudi depicts 'over-

throwing the *ꜣm*¹²³ and the inscriptions of the soldier Tjehemau at Abisko also mention *ꜣmw.w nj.w dꜣtj* 'ꜣmw.w of Djaty' (apparently a southern location) against whom war was waged.¹²⁴ Different branches of *ꜣmw.w* occupied particular regions (Sinai, northern Levant and the eastern desert). Overall, the impression is reinforced that *ꜣmw.w* of different group affiliations were resident in large parts of Egypt already in the early Middle Kingdom.

As has been shown, the term *ꜣt.t* was not exclusively a toponym but is to be understood as an ideological north-eastern entity that included the Sinai as well as the southern and northern Levant by the end of the Middle Kingdom. Accordingly, the same is true for the people called *ꜣt.ty.w*. Thus, it can now be stated that the 'Asiatics' mentioned in the written sources at the time of the Middle Kingdom were a heterogeneous group, composed of people from the entire Levant, the Sinai and the eastern desert.

Interestingly, the archaeological record can also be interpreted in a similar direction. At least the opposite cannot yet be proven. A growth of typical Levantine MBA material in Egypt is noticeable for the Middle Kingdom. Two observations are of great relevance in this respect: the respective distribution of the individual artefacts and specific practices extend over wide landscapes (in the Levant and Mesopotamia) and appear over a very long period of time (already from Early Bronze Age (EBA) I).¹²⁵ In connection with the 'Asiatics' present in Egypt, therefore, a certain affiliation and possible spiritual clusters can be located so far, but this does not yet say from which region people made their way to Egypt in the early 2nd millennium BCE.

Thus, the provoking question arises, whether past identities are textually and/or archaeologically detectable and reconstructable in the context of migration at all.¹²⁶ Egypt's geographic position offered its inhabitants many occasions to interact

¹²⁰ See the recent examination by CANDELORA 2017; the only Egyptian source referencing the Hyksos is the Turin King List.

¹²¹ It is based on Richard White's Middle Ground Theory that says that the social groups involved in the creation of middle ground may have tried to find a justification for their actions in what they assumed to be their partner's cultural premise. See WHITE 1991, 52; CANDELORA 2017, 211–213.

¹²² MURRAY 1935, 14; DARNELL et al. 2005, 98, nn. 115, 116.

¹²³ SADEK 1980, 56 f., no. 31, n. 212.

¹²⁴ ROEDER 1911, vol. 1, 103–111, vol. 2, pls. 106–108; BROVARSKI and MURNANE 1969; DARNELL 2003; DARNELL 2004. The graffiti indicate armed actions as far south as Buhen or possibly Kerma.

¹²⁵ For example, the custom of metal weapons in the funerary context are known from south-eastern Anatolia and northern Syria in EB I-II; see for an overview of the development PRELL 2019.

¹²⁶ E.g. BRATHER 2004; TRIGGER 2006, 166–314; MARCHAND 2009, 292–386; ANTONACCIO 2010.

with various actors and groups (also with different ethnic identities) and to inter-exchange things and ideas. The question of the origin of ethnic groups, in the meaning of self-conscious identity groups, is certainly intriguing, but it is analytically distinct from that of the nature of ‘archaeological cultures’.

In total, there are various variables: individuals or groups have social identities that are fluid and can change with situations. Consequently, the possible repercussions in material culture are manifold and often not even comprehensible. Moreover, population groups do not necessarily create coherent group identities that automatically question the visibility of different identities within single groups. Similarly, migration as a phenomenon does not have a single material correlate or a unitary scheme. Thus, research questions such as the ethnic identity of immigrants or potential migration as main argument for material cultural change should probably be dismissed.¹²⁷

Archaeologists and historians should, therefore, focus on the social and environmental context to

understand the causes, ways and consequences of migration.¹²⁸ Evidence in Tell el-Dab‘a, outlined by Bader, for instance, points to a late Middle Kingdom settlement in area A/II belonging to a middle class, not the poorest social stratum but neither was it the elite. A little higher standard of living may have prevailed in the late Middle Kingdom settlement in area F/I but it is probably not possible to speak of an elite either. At the same time, the sacred temple architecture in both areas seems to reflect the presence of people from an upper social stratum who could initiate such building projects. Consequently, the following questions arise: who indeed lived at this site (professions, social identities) and how did they interact with each other? How these individual aspects on a socio-cultural level can be brought together and integrated into the larger picture of migration still needs to be examined in detail. This study could then be followed by questions on the social cleavage between immigrants and their home regions to deepen the understanding of ancient migration.



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¹²⁷ Biological datasets cannot answer the question of ethnic identity either, because ethnicity is a social and not a biological fact. Instead, for instance, isotope analyses can detect certain temporary residences during an individual’s lifetime.

¹²⁸ Concerning causes and ways of migration during the Middle Kingdom, see PRIGLINGER 2019.

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