A JOURNEY'S END – TWO EGYPTIAN STONE VESSELS WITH HIEROGLYPHIC INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE ROYAL TOMB AT TELL MIŠRIFE/QATNA

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Abstract

Two Egyptian stone vessels bearing hieroglyphic inscriptions were discovered in the royal tomb at Tell Mišrife/Qaṭna (Syria) in the campaign of 2002. The article gives a thorough presentation and examination of the two inscriptions and also aims to shed new light on the debate about the character of the relations between Egypt and the northern Levant in the 2nd millennium BC.

Introduction

Among the numerous finds discovered by the German-Syrian expedition in the excavation campaign of 2002 within the royal tomb of Tell Mišrife/Qaṭna¹ were over sixty Egyptian and Egyptianizing (Egyptian-style) stone vessels. Two of these vessels also bear Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions which will be presented here for the first time.²

These two vessels from the royal tomb fall within the larger context of the various Egyptian imports found throughout the Levant. Regarding the problematic interpretation of this material, the inscriptions which are being dealt with here may possibly give an important new insight into the complex system of interconnections and exchange mechanisms and the nature of relations

in general that existed between Egypt and the contemporary northern Levantine rulers during the second millennium BC.

Although both vessels lack a secure dating in terms of stratigraphy from within the tomb – apart from the proposed period of occupation of the palace and tomb ca. 1850/1800–1340 BC³ –, the specific dates of the hieroglyphic inscriptions on the vessels can give a *terminus post quem* for their arrival at Qatna (see below pg. 24 Furthermore, the specific historical implications of the inscriptions may help to evaluate and reassess certain questions pertaining to the cross-cultural exchange between these two regions.

1. The Findspots of the Vessels within the Royal Tomb

The overall distribution of the Egyptian and Egyptianizing stone vessels covers all four chambers of the royal tomb. However, the findspots of the two Egyptian stone vessels with hieroglyphic inscriptions are confined to chambers 1 and 3 (see Fig. 1).⁵

The squat jar MSH02G-i0834 (Ahmes-Nefertari/Nefer-peret) made of calcite was found placed on a stone bench in the south-western part of chamber 1,6 whereas the drop-shaped alabas-

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For the royal tomb and its finds cf. AL-MAQDISSI et al. 2002 and PFÄLZNER 2003.

This article is part of the author's MA thesis on the Egyptian and Egyptianizing stone vessels found within the royal tomb and the palace at Tell Mišrife/Qatna (for more details and a comprehensive presentation of all vessels cf. Ahrens 2005 and Ahrens forthc. a; b). I would like to thank G. Elsen-Novák M.A. for helping with the drawing of the vessels published here, M. Novák for useful suggestions and comments and P. Pfälzner for generously granting the permission to publish the finds (all Tübingen). For helpful discussions on Egyptian and Egyptianizing stone vessels in general I would like to thank Chr. Lilyquist (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), R.T. Sparks and A. Bevan (both University College, London). S.P. Harvey (The Oriental Institute, Chicago) provided information and help concerning the unpublished material of the excavations at the cult complex of Ahmose. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to W. Guglielmi (Tübingen), K. Zibelius-Chen (Berlin) and

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³ For the latest stratigraphic sequence of the palace cf. Nováκ 2004: 314, especially fig. 13 and Nováκ 2006: 63. The palace of Qaṭna was most probably founded in the transition from Middle Bronze Age I to II, i.e. roughly contemporary with the period of the archives of Mari (18th to 17th century BC) and was most likely destroyed in the 14th century BC (ca. 1340 BC). For the date of the destruction of the palace and a new historical and chronological perspective cf. RICHTER 2002a; 2002b; 2003 and 2005.

⁴ This, of course, is definitely not to say that the inscriptions on these vessels can date the precise time of their arrival in the northern Levant or at Qatna respectively.

Apart from the two stone vessels presented in this article no other Egyptian and Egyptianizing stone vessels found in the royal tomb and the palace will be dealt with here

For the findspot of the vessel cf. Al-MAQDISSI et al. 2002: 197, fig. 6 and 200, fig. 8.

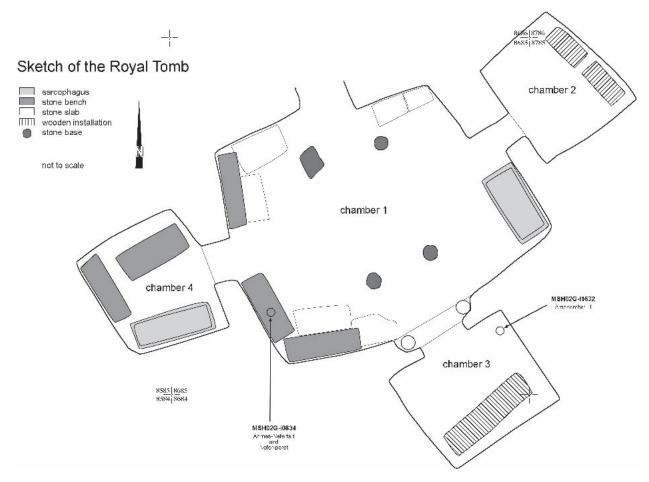


Fig. 1 Sketch of the royal tomb indicating the findspots of the two Egyptian vessels with hieroglyphic inscriptions (drawing by G. Elsen-Novák)

tron MSH02G-i1632 (Amenemhat III.) made of serpentinite was discovered lying on the floor in the north-eastern part of chamber 3 among a group of 15 other Egyptian stone vessels (all of them being characteristic Middle Kingdom types).⁷

2. MATERIAL, TYPOLOGY AND CHRONOLOGY

Before dealing with the historical and archaeological implications of the inscriptions themselves, a relatively short and basic typological and chronological description of the vessels is necessary. Note, however, that the types presented below are referred to only as "New" or "Middle Kingdom" types without any further chronological specification.

a) MSH02G-i0834

The squat calcite 8 jar MSH02G-i0834 (H: 12.5 cm; Wd: 19.4 cm) with a broad flat-topped rim, flat-

None of them bear hieroglyphic inscriptions. However, apart from the serpentinite drop-shaped alabastron MSH02G-i-1632 presented in this article, only one further vessel of the assemblage of stone vessels in chamber 3 is not made of calcite: it is a small bottle made of carnelian, its shape again dating to the Middle Kingdom. These vessels will be presented in detail elsewhere, cf. Ahrens forthc. a; for a first and preliminary description of the findspot and the chamber in general cf. Al-Maqdissi et al. 2002: 198ff.; especially 199, fig. 7 and Pfälzner 2003.

⁸ Also termed "Calcite-Alabaster". For a general description of the material, its provenances in Egypt and the

geological terminology cf. Klemm and Klemm 1991; 1993: 199ff. The term "Travertine" (cf. Aston *et al.* 2000: 59 f.; Harrell 1990) is not used in this article. For the sake of completeness it should be noted that a cartouche containing the name of Queen Ahmes-Nefertari was found in the vicinity of the calcite quarries known today as "Bosra/Bisra" in the Wadi 'Assiuti, clearly showing the active involvement of the early 18th Dynasty in the quarrying of this stone (for the cartouche and its inscription cf. Weigall 1911; Klemm and Klemm 1993: 220 and Harvey 1998: 67f.). For further building projects of the early 18th Dynasty see below, pg. 22.



Fig. 2 Squat calcite jar MSH02G-i0834 (photo by G. Mirsch; drawing by G. Elsen-Novák)



Fig. 3 Drop-shaped alabastron MSH02G-i1632 (photo by G. Mirsch; drawing by G. Elsen-Novák)

tened base and unpierced lug-handles (see Fig. 2) dates to the early 18th Dynasty, the beginning of the New Kingdom.

Vessels of this specific kind are apparently already sporadically known from contexts dating to the Middle Kingdom but the type seems to appear in greater numbers only from the New Kingdom onwards.⁹

Obviously, the distinct shape of the vessel, including the execution and the placement of the unpierced lugged handles, clearly recalls Pre- or Early Dynastic (also Archaic) types of Egyptian stone vessels and it is because of these specific features that the character of these vessels may probably quite fittingly be termed "archaizing" or "archaic" although their manufacture must surely – in almost all cases – be dated to the 18th Dynasty or the New Kingdom in general.¹⁰

Furthermore, since genuine Archaic stone vessels, especially when made of precious raw materials, are often found reused in later contexts, it is not surprising to find both types together in archaeological contexts dating to the 2nd millennium BC.¹¹

b) MSH02G-i1632

The drop-shaped (»ridge-necked«) alabastron

MSH02G-i1632 (H: 21.2 cm; Wd: 12.5 cm) made of a greyish to greenish serpentinite¹² (see Fig. 3) is a well-known Middle Kingdom type and has numerous chronologically attested parallels in Egypt¹³ and – to a certain degree – also in contexts dating to the 2nd millennium BC at various sites in the northern Levant.¹⁴

The specific type found in the royal tomb features an everted rim with three parallel grooves or ridges between the rim and the base of the neck and a typically round, slightly pointed base – hence the name »drop-shaped« for this type of vessel.

3. THE HIEROGLYPHIC INSCRIPTIONS

Turning now to the inscriptions and their historical implications it should be emphasized once more that these cannot be regarded as chronological indicators for the deposition of the two vessels in the royal tomb.

3.1 Drop-shaped Alabastron MSH02G-i1632 (Amenemhat III.)

The inscription is engraved on the side in the middle of the vessel and framed within a rectangular square (measurements: 7.2×7.4 cm). The rectangular frame itself consists of three single

other related types found in the northern Levant cf. BADRE 1997: fig. 15.1-3, fig. 18.a-b (Beirut, the so-called "Treasure Deposit"/Silo 80/300); Scandone Matthiae apud Matthiae 1995: 501, cat. nos. 463-464 (Tell Mardikh/Ebla, "Tomb of the Lord of the Goats"); WOOLLEY 1955: 296ff. and pls. XXI.a, LXXX.a and LXXXII.15 (Tell Açana/Alalakh, vessel AT/39/244; from the "Yarim-Lim Palace", stratum VII); MONTET 1928: pl. CXXII.820 and .847-848 (Byblos, within the »tombeaux royales«, royal tombs I and II), Schaeffer 1938: pl. XXIV and CAUBET 1991: pl. I.3 (Ras Shamra/Ugarit); Fugmann 1958: 101, fig. 124.2 (Hama, level H₁, probably belonging to the final phase of MB II); Du Mesnil du Buisson 1928: pl. XIX.1 (from the royal palace of Qatna, probably from the so-called "sanctuaire"; "matière calcinée"). The type is also attested in the Aegean (cf. Warren 1969: 109ff., cat-no. P 607 and BEVAN 2003: 70ff., from the royal tomb at Isopata), Northern Mesopotamia (cf. OATES et al. 1997: 108, fig. 139 and fig. 229.103 for a vessel of this type found at Tell Brak, »Mitanni Palace«, level 5/6; cf. von Bissing 1940 and 1942 for Egyptian stone vessels found by the German excavations at Assur and Babylon) and at numerous sites in the southern Levant, cf. Sparks 1996: 51ff.; 2001 and especially SPARKS in press for a presentation and chronological discussion of these vessels; also cf. BEVAN in press.

⁹ Cf. Lilyquist 1995: 10–12 and figs. 8–9; 82; el-Khouli et al. 1993; cat. nos. 39 and 40.

¹⁰ Cf. Lilyquist 1995: 10–12; Lilyquist 2003: 246 and 256: cat. 168; 257: fig. 200.

Three Archaic Egyptian stone vessels (dating to the 1st–2nd dynasties) were found within the royal tomb, cf. Ahrens forth. a and b. For further examples of Archaic Egyptian stone vessels in the northern Levant found in archaeological contexts dating to the 2nd Millennium BC cf. Matthiae 1995: 446 and 475, cat.-n°. 386 (Tell Mardikh/Ebla; "Tomb of the Lord of the Goats", chamber C); Fugmann 1958: 98, fig. 120 (Hama, level H₁); Caubet 1991: pls. I.1–2 and VIII.12 (Ras Shamra/Ugarit); Edel 1983: 38f. and figs. 15–16, Miron 1990: pl. 24.3, Lilyquist 1994: 217, Lilyquist 1996: pl. 28.1–3 (Kamid el-Loz/Kumidi) and Woolley 1953 and 1955: pl. LXXXI.9 (Tell Açana/Alalakh); Sparks 2003: 42.

For a geological description of the material serpentinite and its probable provenance in Egypt (the Wadi Hammamat, Wadi 'Atalla and Wadi Umm Esh in the Eastern Desert) cf. Klemm and Klemm 1993: fig. 401 and pls. 13.1–13.3; ASTON 1994: 56ff. and ASTON *et al.* 2000: 56 f, especially *Variety* 2.

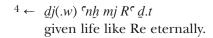
¹³ It is not possible to present an exhaustive list of all the examples of this type that found in Egypt, for references cf. Ben-Dor 1945; Lilyquist 1995 and Sparks in press.

¹⁴ For further examples of drop-shaped alabastra and

lines at the bottom and at the sides but features a double line at the top. 15

The hieroglyphic inscription is well preserved and consists of three vertical lines¹⁶ and one horizontal line (see Fig. 4). It can be read and translated as follows:¹⁷

- $1 \leftarrow s3 R^{c}$ (*Imn-m-h3.t*) Son of Re Amenemhat,
- ² ← *njswt bjtj (Nj-m3^c.t-R^c)*King of Upper- and Lower Egypt Ni-maat-Re,
- ³ → mry Sbk Šd.tj beloved of Sobek Shedeti,



3.1.1 The Historical Framework and Commentary

King Amenemhat III. (ca. 1853–1806 BC¹⁸) of the 12th Dynasty devoted much of his energy to the area of the Fayyum and is known to have built extensively there, including the main temple of the crocodile god Sobek at Shedet (*Šd.t;* Medinat al-Fayyum/Kîman Fāris),¹⁹ which was located close to the newly established capital *Jt-t3.wj* (el-Lisht).

The cult of the god Sobek, which was centered at Shedet, was to become the most prominent cult



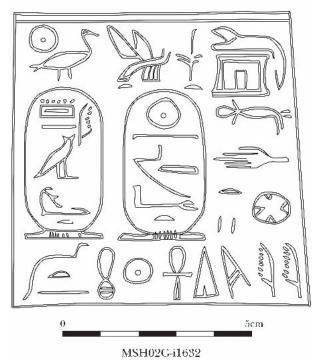


Fig. 4 Hieroglyphic inscription of MSH02G-i1632 (photo by G. Mirsch; drawing by G. Elsen-Novák; copy of inscription by A. Ahrens)

¹⁵ This frame is obviously to be seen as an abstract or rather simplified depiction of the earth-line below, the sky-hieroglyph (*p.t*) at the top and supporting pillars at each side (normally in the form of two *w3s*-scepters). For examples – both elaborated and simplified – cf. FISCHER 1976: pl. XXIII, fig. 21 and LILYQUIST 1995: 85, fig. 21 and 88ff.; figs. 35–63.

¹⁶ It is interesting to note here that the two royal cartouches with the name of the king and the name of the god are facing each other, thus creating and expressing some kind of »intimate relationship« or »intimacy« between the king and the deity.

 $^{^{\}rm 17}~$ For a similar inscription on a cylinder seal found at Tell

el-Yahudiyeh in the eastern Nile Delta cf. Petrie 1906: pl. I.12.

 $^{^{18}}$ For the chronology cf. von Beckerath 1997.

For the very fragmented ruins of the temple at Kîman Faris and its religious importance cf. Habachi 1937 and Hirsch 2004: 122ff. There seems to have been a temple and a cult centered at Shedet even before the Middle Kingdom (cf. Gomaá 1984; 1986: 395ff.), but the main construction work apparently was commissioned under Amenemhat III. alone. Of particular interest in this respect is an inscription found in the Eastern Desert (Wadi Hammamat), dated to year 19 of the reign of Amenemhat III. The inscription mentions an expedition

under the reign of Amenemhat III.,²⁰ so it is not surprising to find a vessel mentioning his titles and the name of the main god of that region.

The inscription makes it very probable that the vessel was originally conceived and used for a religious purpose, probably – although without definite proof – within the temple of the god Sobek at Shedet.²¹

3.2 Squat Calcite Jar MSH02G-i0834 (Ahmes-Nefertari/Nefer-peret)

The hieroglyphic inscription is placed in the middle of the side of the jar with some slight irregularity in orientation. The inscription (measurements: 2.8×6.2 cm) is subdivided and marked by three vertical dividing lines ("Zeilentrenner") in the middle and at both sides of the two columns.²²

The hierogylphs within these columns are arranged facing each other; the state of preservation of the inscription is in some parts very fragmentary, and also the execution of the hieroglyphs appears to be very basic and rudimentary.²³ In spite of the very bad condition of the inscription, the hieroglyphs and the content can be read and understood without any difficulties or problems (see Fig. 5):

1 → dj(.w) m ḥs(w).t n.t <ḥr>
 hm.t nṭr ḥm.t nṣswt mw.t nṣswt (T·ḥ-mś-nfr.t-jr.j) ¬nḥ.tɨ
 Given as a Gift of Honour by the God's Wife, the King's Wife, the King's Mother, Ahmes-Nefertari, she may live,

sent out to quarry greywacke for ten seated statues of the king dedicated to the temple of Sobek at Shedet. Apart from clearly revealing the importance of the temple at Shedet, the inscription may also show that different kinds of stone were quarried in that specific region. This may also be the case for the material serpentinite – which is known to have large and easily accessible outcrops in the Wadi Hammamat – although there is as yet no conclusive evidence for the use of these sources during the 12th dynasty. For the inscription dating to the reign of Amenemhat III. in the Wadi Hammamat cf. Goedicke 1964: 49, fig. 3; Seyfried 1981: 255ff. and Hirsch 2004: 122.

For the importance of the cult of *Sbk Šd.tj* and the Fayyum in general especially under the reign of Amenemhat III. cf. HIRSCH 2004: 123; VERBOVSEK 2004: 129ff.; 2006: 87ff.

As there is at the moment no direct archaeological parallel for the vessel that could hint at a better interpretation and localization of the object, the exact origin of the vessel has to remain hypothetical and unclear. It could also well be that the vessel, originating from a royal workshop, was used outside of the temple of Sobek at Shedet. For the attestation of the god Sobek outside of Shedet, cf. Hirsch 2004: 120ff.

² ← n (j)r(j)-p^c.t ḥ3.tj-^c śmr w^c.tj jmj-r3 ḥtm.t sd.tj njswt Nfr-pr.t m3^c-hrw to the Iripat (»Count«), the Hatia (»Hereditary Noble«), Sole Companion, the Chief Treasurer, the King's Fosterling, Nefer-peret, justified.

3.2.1 The Historical Framework and Commentary

Both individuals mentioned in the inscription – Queen Ahmes-Nefertari and the Chief Treasurer Nefer-peret – belong chronologically and historically to the period of the early 18th Dynasty. As both of these individuals are also attested together in other historical documents of that period, there is ample evidence to date the inscription – and therefore also the vessel – to the very beginning of the New Kingdom.²⁴

3.2.1.1 Queen Ahmes-Nefertari

The prominent historical and political role of Queen Ahmes-Nefertari (ca. 1552–1526 BC²⁵) can be reconstructed well with the help of the monuments discovered which carry her name and titles.²⁶ The important role of the queen is most probably also due to the strong matriarchal tendency that is observable throughout the 17th Dynasty and the early part of the 18th Dynasty.²⁷

Ahmes-Nefertari, possibly the daughter of Seqenenre-Ta^co and Ahhotep of the 17th Dynasty,²⁸ wife and also sister of King Ahmose and mother of the later King Amenhotep I., was the first royal woman

These dividing lines (also called »dividers«) probably also served to emphasize the relatively small inscription, for more examples cf. LILYQUIST 1995.

Again this is most probably due to the very small scale of the inscription in general, which did not allow a finer execution.

²⁴ There is no reason to suggest that the inscription was added to the vessel at a later time.

²⁵ For the chronology cf. VON BECKERATH 1997.

For the life, the institution of the office of the God's Wife, and the religious and political functions of Queen Ahmes-Nefertari in general cf. GITTON 1975; 1976 and GRAEFE 1981. It is also because of her long reign from the time of Ahmose until the time of Thutmose I. (in which reign she probably died. For the reconstruction of the date of her death cf. BRADBURY 1985: 95, especially tab. 4 and Klug 2002: 15ff.) that numerous historical documents mention the queen and portray her relationship to the early 18th Dynasty.

²⁷ Cf. Gitton 1975: 13f.; Ryholt 1997: 167ff. and Vandersleyen 1971: 163ff.

²⁸ For the genealogy cf. RYHOLT 1997: 277ff., § 3.8.4, tab. 81 and KLUG 2002: 70.

to be given the privilege of bearing the title *hm.t ntr* »God's Wife (of Amun)«, a title that indicated both religious and political functions. From the time of Ahmes-Nefertari onward an economic entity associated with the office called *pr hm.t ntr* »estate of the God's Wife« existed.²⁹

After her death she was deified together with her son Amenhotep I. – maybe starting already in the late 18th Dynasty – and her posthumous cult is well attested, especially in the workers' village at

Deir al-Medina.³⁰ It still remains a matter of dispute where the tomb of the queen is to be located.³¹

The three titles of Ahmes-Nefertari given in the inscription of the vessel *hm.t ntr*, *hm.t njswt* and *mw.t njswt* fully conform with the series of titles attributed to Ahmes-Nefertari in other documents.³² However, it is only the last of these titles *mw.t njswt* (King's Mother) that might help to date the inscription – and hence also the vessel – more precisely (see below, § 3.2.1.2.pg. 22).



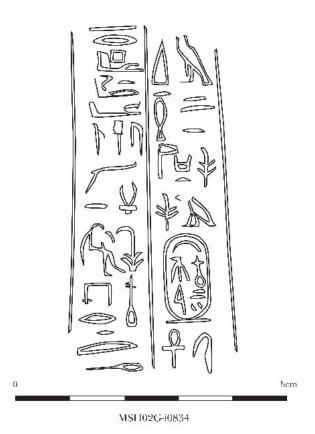


Fig. 5 Hieroglyphic inscription of MSH02G-i0834 (photo by G. Mirsch; drawing by G. Elsen-Novák; copy of inscription by A. Ahrens)

For the estate of the God's Wife cf. GRAEFE 1981: 96. It is obvious that the prestigious title hm.t ntr »God's Wife (of Amun) « did not only imply religious functions but also included many political duties, cf. HARVEY 1998. This fact is also exemplified by the cartouche of the queen at the stone quarries at »Bosra« mentioned above (see pg. 16) and several other construction works carried out under her name (see pg. 22).

³⁰ It could well be that the village of Deir al-Medina was founded by Amenhotep I. and Ahmes-Nefertari. However, the first historical attestation of the village dates to the reign of Thutmose I., cf. GITTON 1975: 45ff.

The possible mummy of Ahmes-Nefertari was found in 1881 within the cachette DB 320 at Deir al-Bahri. For a location of her tomb at Dra^c Abû el-Naga cf. Carter 1916 (AN B, Carter attributed the tomb to her son Amenhotep I.); Gitton 1975; Romer 1976: 201; Dodson 1988: 119; cf. Polz 1995a; 1995b: 215ff. and Polz et al. 2003: 319ff. (tombs K₉₃.11/12).

³² For a detailed analysis and a comprehensive list of all the titles attested to Queen Ahmes-Nefertari cf. GITTON 1975; TROY 1986. For the title *mw.t njswt* cf. ROTH 2001: 254ff.; 2002.

The introductory passage of the inscription $\underline{dj}(.w)$ m hs(w).t n.t $<\underline{hr}>[(Th-ms-nfr.t-jr.j)]$ »given as a gift of honour by [...] Ahmes-Nefertari« makes it obvious that the vessel was originally given to the Chief Treasurer Nefer-peret as a reward and a sign of royal privilege by Queen Ahmes-Nefertari. Thus it seems plausible to attribute the vessel to a royal workshop (from the pr hm.t ntr?) or palace stock, and to think that it was commissioned for an individual person (i.e. Nefer-peret) by order of the king or – in this case – the queen.

3.2.1.2 Chief Treasurer Nefer-peret

The Chief Treasurer Nefer-peret³⁴ of the early 18th Dynasty was hitherto only known from two historical documents in Egypt. The hieroglyphic inscription on vessel MSH02G-i0834 from the royal tomb at Qaṭna is thus the third attestation of Nefer-peret known so far.

Nefer-peret is attested for the first time on two almost identical rock-cut stelae at the limestone quarries of el-Ma^câsara (south of Tura on the eastern bank of the Nile)³⁵ in the regnal year 22 of King Ahmose and Queen Ahmes-Nefertari (stelae A and B).³⁶ The texts of both stelae refer to the reopening of the quarries and the breaking of the limestone there for the building projects of King Ahmose after the expulsion of the Hyksos.³⁷ Fur-

thermore, below the hieroglyphic inscription of stela A there is an image of three bearded asiatics and cattle pulling a sled laden with a rectangular block of limestone. The cattle are described in the text as coming from the region of Fenkhu (Fnh.w), probably in the course of the wars conducted by King Ahmose in southern Palestine.³⁸

The text of the stelae mentions the quarrying of stone for a temple of Ptah (at Memphis?) and the temple of Amun at Thebes as well as *mn.w nb.w jrj.n hm* *f * all the monuments which His Majesty (Ahmose) built (*Urk.* IV: 25, l. 11). With the enumeration of these important building projects in the texts of the stelae the important role of the Chief Treasurer Nefer-peret within the bureaucracy and the administration of the early 18th Dynasty is exemplified.

Almost all of the titles of Chief Treasurer Nefer-peret given in the inscriptions of the two stelae at el-Ma'âsara are also attested in the inscription of the vessel from the royal tomb. Both inscriptions – at el-Macâsara as well as on the vessel from Qaṭna – start with the archaic titles *jrj-pc.t.* »Count, lit.: member of the elite« and *h3.tj-cc.t.* »Hereditary Noble, lit.: foremost of action« which probably do not imply any specific function or office in the early 18th Dynasty but perhaps merely served as markers of the individual's status.³⁹

³³ For the use of this specific passage and further references cf. Pumpenmeier 1998: 47f.; for the term *hsw.t* and its implications cf. Guksch 1994: 39ff. and 138ff. passim.

For the name and person cf. Ranke 1935 [PN I]: 196, no. 8 and Helck 1958: 344 and 466: 1. Helck concludes: "Weitere Denkmäler des *Nfr-pr.t* sind nicht erhalten, so dass wir über sein Leben nichts erfahren können« (Helck 1958: 8).

For the quarry cf. Klemm and Klemm 1993: 65ff.

There is apparently no explanation for the existence of two almost identical stelae. As both of the stelae date to year 22 of the reign of Ahmose, a second expedition under Nefer-peret to the quarries must be excluded. Maybe unknown practical reasons (exposure to water, cracks in the rock, etc.) led to the execution of a second stela nearby. Lepsius' drawings clearly show that the stelae – although with some mistakes concerning the hieroglyphic inscriptions – are slightly different in conception, layout and content, cf. Lepsius 1852 [LD III]: Abth. III. B1/3a (nº. 6) and b (nº. 8). However, cf. Vittmann 1974: 250f. for an interpretation of the two stelae as signs of a possible coregency of Ahmose and Amenhotep I. An alternative view is put forward by Harvey 1998: 33ff.

For the inscription cf. Urk. IV: 24f. (24–25); DARESSY 1911; VANDERSLEYEN 1971: 102f.; PM IV: 74, nos. 6 and 8; HARVEY 1998: 61ff.; Ullmann 2002: 17–25; BEYLAGE 2002: 421ff. with other references. The date given on the stelae (year 22 of Ahmose) fits well with the date of

the reconquest of the delta and the expulsion of the Hyksos which apparently was not achieved before the year 18 of King Ahmose, cf. HARVEY 1998: 64 and 303ff.

Cf. Daressy 1911: 263 and Vandersleyen 1971: 102ff. With regard to the findspot of vessel MSH02G-i0834 in the royal tomb it should be noted that the region known to the Egyptians of the early 18th Dynasty as Fnh.w is surely not to be equated with the toponym »Phoenicia« of the 1^{st} millennium BC, but cf. Schneider 2002: 266ff. Additionally, there is no reason to suggest that Neferperet's office had any relation with the northern Levant. It is generally more plausible to conclude that at least in the time of the early 18th Dynasty the territory of Fenkhu has to be located in southern Palestine. This seems also to be the case with the contemporary toponym D3hy »Djahi« mentioned in the tomb of Ahmose-Pennekhbet (*I'h-mś Pn-Nhb.t*) at el-Kab. This is probably also a region conquered by Ahmose in southern Palestine (Urk. IV: 32f., especially 36). It may therefore be located in the vicinity of Sharuhen, cf. VANDERSLEYEN 1971: 91-100; Weinstein 1981: 5-8 and Hoffmeier 2004.

For the titles of Nefer-peret at el-Ma^casara cf. *Urk.* IV: 25, l. 13ff. For the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period however – and the early 18th Dynasty might be included in this respect – GRAJETZKI 2000: 221ff. rightly concludes that the titles *jrj-p^c.t* and *h3.tj-^c* (»Rangtitel«), also including the title *smr w^c.tj* (see below), almost always appear together and that

The third title smr w^c .tj »Sole Companion« 40 most probably also does not denote a specific office. Interestingly though, the title always seems to appear in conjunction with the titles $jrj-p^c$.t and h3.tj-c. 41

The last title *sd.tj njswt* »the King's Fosterling« is unique in many ways. It is attested rather seldom and its actual meaning is not yet understood with certainty.⁴² It seems probable that this title refers to an early upbringing of Chief Treasurer Nefer-peret in connection or close relation with the royal court and household – maybe even together with the king.⁴³ This may also explain the close relationship Nefer-peret seems to have had with both King Ahmose and Queen Ahmes-Nefertari according to the historical documents discovered. However, Nefer-peret's familiar affiliations remain unknown.

It is only the following official or regular title *jmj-r3 htm.t* »Chief Treasurer« that defines the actual office held by Nefer-peret.⁴⁴ The office of

the Chief Treasurer was without doubt one of the most important offices within the Egyptian administration from the First Intermediate Period onwards.⁴⁵

The epithet *m³c-hrw* »justified/vindicated; lit.: true of voice« that follows Nefer-peret's name cannot be used to prove that the Chief Treasurer already was deceased at the time when the vessel was commissioned. 46 Still, as there are also numerous parallels indicating that individuals named *m³c-hrw* were in fact deceased, there is ample evidence to conclude that Nefer-peret was actually deceased at that time. Accepting this possibility, the vessel from the royal tomb at Qaṭṇa could then be regarded as formerly having been part of the funerary equipment of Nefer-peret's tomb. 47

The second archaeological attestation of Chief Treasurer Nefer-peret in Egypt has recently been found at Abydos by a mission of The Oriental Institute Chicago under the direction of S.P. Harvey.⁴⁸ It is here, within the vicinity of the pyramid

- individuals holding these titles often served as royal dignitaries of the administration. However, it is only Nefer-peret's regular title of a *jmj-r3 htm.t* »Chief Treasurer« that primarily denotes his office (»Amtstitel«). For further references cf. WARD 1982: no. 364; GRAJETZKI 2000: 43ff.; QUIRKE 1986 and QUIRKE 2004: 48f.
- ⁴⁰ Cf. Grajetzki 2000: 224f., 13.4.4. It is very probable that this title only denotes a general connection with the royal administration. Towards the 13th Dynasty the title *smr w*^c.tj (»Rangtitel«) is almost exclusively confined to individuals holding the office of Chief Treasurer.
- Uth. IV: 25, l. 15 (el-Macasara). For this specific combination or sequence of regular titles cf. Franke 1982: 20 and Grajetzki 2000: vii, 221ff. and 227ff. (i.e. Franke's "Hofrangtitel" and Grajetzki's "Rangtitel"). Compared to the inscriptions at el-Macasara and the evidence drawn from other parallels only the title htm.tj-bjtj is missing on the vessel from the royal tomb at Qaṭṇa. The reasons for this are not clear, but chronological aspects can probably be excluded as the vessel was obviously manufactured at the same time or even shortly after the inscriptions at el-Macasara were executed (i.e. year 22 of King Ahmose).
- For this title cf. Ward 1982: no. 1506 and Grajetzki 2000: 69, no. 59; ("Beititel"). For the differentiation of the titles known as "Beititel" cf. Franke 1984a: 124; Grajetzki 2000: 4f.
- ⁴³ This interpretation of the title *sd.tj njswt* has been put forward by Feucht 1995: 230f and Grajetzki 2000: 246. It is interesting to note that the aforementioned Ahmose Pennekhbet in turn is raising Hatshepsut's daughter *Nfr.w-R^c.w* while holding the title *jmj-r3 ltm.t* (*»jw šd.n=j s3<.t>s wr.t s3.t njswt Nfr.w-R^c.w*«, cf. *Urk.* IV, 34). One of Hatshepsut's titles given in this context is that of a *hm.t ntr* »God's Wife«, cf. Helck 1958: 346.

- This albeit later evidence may emphasize the close relation of the office of a Chief Treasurer with the royal family. Already in the 12th Dynasty vizier Mentuhotep (reign of Senwosret I.) is holding the title *sd.tj njswt* in direct connection with the regular title of a *jmj-r3 htm.t* »Chief Treasurer«, cf. Franke 1984b: dos. 262; SIMPSON 1991: 336 and Verboysek 2004: 402f.
- For the reading of the title *jmj-r³ htm.t* cf. Franke 1984a; Fischer 1976; Quirke 1990: vii; Quirke 1996: 118; Quirke 2004: 48. (Gardiner signs S 19 and S 20 are obviously interchangeable in the writing of the title).
- For the office of the Chief Treasurer in general cf. Helck 1958: 77ff. and Grajetzki 2000: 66ff., 72ff. and 221ff.; Grajetzki 2001: 5–9; Quirke 2004: 48.
- ⁴⁶ The epithet apparently was also attributed to living persons. For an analysis of this epithet and its implications cf. Doxey 1998: 90ff. and Budka 2001: 49ff. For the designation of *Qn-Jmn(.w)* as *m3^c-ltrw* who at that time was still alive, cf. Pumpenmeier 1998: 55 and 75.
- His tomb (at Drac Abû el-Naga?), however, has not yet been found: the vessel thus could also derive from a cenotaph (maybe located at Abydos²), cf. Simpson 1971; 1991. It is interesting to note that a Chief Treasurer named *J3mw* is attested in the reign of Amenhotep I. (cf. Helck 1958: 345). As the stelae at el-Macâsara give the title *mw.t njswt* »King's Mother« for Ahmes-Nefertari it is clear that the later King Amenhotep I. was already born (for the question of a supposed coregency cf. VITTMANN 1974 and Harvey 1998: 33ff.) and Nefer-peret still alive at that time (i.e. regnal year 22 of Ahmose). He then probably died in the reign of Amenhotep I. For the possibility of acquiring goods through tomb-robbing cf. Phillips 1992: 185f. and below pg. 28.
- 48 Cf. Harvey 1994; 1998; 2003 and Harvey forthc. for the extraordinary results obtained.

complex of King Ahmose,⁴⁹ that several stamped mud bricks belonging to an exterior wall of a structure with cultic functions (Temple A) were found bearing the inscription of the *jmj-r3 htm.t Nfr-pr.t* »Chief Treasurer Nefer-peret«.⁵⁰

However, the majority of stamped mudbricks recovered in the vicinity of the cult complex belong to King Ahmose and Queen Ahmes-Nefertari. The fact that Nefer-peret's name is also found on the mudbricks used for the building "Temple A« within the cult complex exemplifies the extraordinary position of the Chief Treasurer within the administration and his close relationship to the king and queen. It seems likely that Nefer-peret was in charge of building these structures and thus contributed parts of the mudbricks used for construction. The active and prominent role of the Nefer-peret in the carrying out of construction works was probably due to his office as a *jmj-r3 htm.t.*⁵²

Interesting and very intriguing is the possible connection between the inscriptions at the quarries of el-Macâsara and the archaeological evidence from the cult complex at Abydos. It seems very possible that the limestone which was quarried at el-Macâsara by Nefer-peret's expedition in year 22 of Ahmose was used for the construction of the cult complex at Abydos that was being built at the same time or slightly later. Indeed, it is very likely that the stone was quarried and used for mn.w nb.w jrj.n hmf wall the monuments which His Majesty built«.

Considering the close relation of Chief Treasurer Nefer-peret to Ahmose and Ahmes-Nefertari as revealed by the the archaeological evidence at el-Ma^câsara and Abydos it is reasonable to suggest that the vessel discovered within the royal tomb at Qaṭna was originally given to Nefer-peret as (part of) a reward for the royal construction projects carried out under his supervision and his achievements as *jmj-r³ htm.t.*⁵³

The vessel's hieroglyphic inscription thus adds some new information to our understanding and reconstruction of the administration of the early 18th Dynasty and the life of the Chief Treasurer Nefer-peret.

4. THE POSSIBLE DATE OF THE VESSELS' DISPATCHMENT

When discussing the vessels' possible date of dispatchment and deposition within the royal tomb, it is necessary to recall the proposed time-span of the occupation of the palace and the royal tomb. As mentioned before, the archaeological evidence makes it clear that the foundation of the palace cannot predate the transitional phase from Middle Bronze Age I to II (i.e. the late 19th or early 18th century BC).⁵⁴ The destruction of the royal palace of Qaṭna – and thus the blocking of the entrance to the royal tomb by the debris – gives a secure *terminus ante quem* for the transfer to Qaṭna and the deposition of the vessels inside the tomb at the end of the 14th century (ca. 1340 BC).⁵⁵

When taking into account the historical and chronological implications of the vessels' hiero-

⁴⁹ The complex was already partly excavated by A.C. Mace and C.T. Currelly at the beginning of the 20th century. For the findings and results cf. Mace 1902 and Currel-LY 1904; for a summary of the old excavations cf. Har-VEY 1998; 2003.

⁵⁰ For the inscription of Nefer-peret on the mudbricks and their distribution cf. Harvey 1998: 487: types 7a and 7b; 489. It is obvious that the stamped mudbricks were not merely used for practical reasons (i.e. to indicate the institution responsible for making the mudbricks) but also served a religious purpose, especially since the "holy city" of Abydos was chosen as a building site. Could it be that Nefer-peret also built a cenotaph for himself here (see n. 47)?

 $^{^{51}\,}$ Cf. Harvey 1998: 487, types 1–6; 8; Harvey 2003: 22.

⁵² Cf. Helck 1958: 78ff. and Grajetzki 2000: 73 with further references. Already in the Middle Kingdom the office of the Chief Treasurer apparently included the supervision of expeditions and royal construction projects.

⁵³ As mentioned before (pg. 23) it is not clear whether Nefer-peret was still alive (cenotaph) or already deceased at that time and the vessel thus part of his funerary equipment (see n. 47). If Nefer-peret died

early in the reign of Amenhotep I., it might be interesting to note that only the cartouche of Ahmes-Nefertari (and not the cartouche of Ahmose) was inscribed on the vessel: could it be that King Ahmose was already deceased and Ahmes-Nefertari ruling alone at the time the vessel was commissioned (Amenhotep I. at that time being still too young to rule)? However, as Ahmes-Nefertari apparently seems to have been in charge of numerous building projects, she may also have been the one to "correspond" with the Chief Treasurer. Furthermore, it is plausible to conclude that workshops were attached to the *pr hm.t ntr* »Estate of the God's Wife«. These workshops would probably produce and distribute objects commissioned for individuals by order of the God's Wife, and therefore named only her.

⁵⁴ Cf. Novák 2004: 314.

For the possible date of the destruction of the palace from a historical perspective cf. RICHTER 2002b; 2003 and 2005; Novák and PFÄLZNER 2003: 162f. For an outline of the history in general cf. Klengel 1969; 1992: 65ff.,156ff. and 2000. There is no evidence for a later use of the palace of Qaṭṇa until the partial reoccupation in the Iron Age, cf. Novák 2004: 315.

glpyhic inscriptions as described above, it is evident that the calcite jar MSH02G-i0834 must have been deposited in the royal tomb sometime during the 18th Dynasty, possibly only during the later part of that dynasty. However, such a clear and precise definition in terms of chronology cannot be established for the export of the drop-shaped alabastron MSH02G-i1632. The period of time in which the vessel could have got to Qaṭna and into the royal tomb is about 450 to 500 years (i.e. 12th–18th Dynasties). To

In this regard it may also prove useful to take into account the overall distribution of inscribed Egyptian objects attributed to King Amenemhat III. and the early 18th Dynasty in the northern Levant.

4.1 Objects attributed to Amenemhat III. in the Northern Levant

Inscribed objects naming King Amenemhat III. have been found at various sites in the northern Levant.⁵⁸ In the royal tombs I and III at Byblos one pectoral (tomb I)⁵⁹ and one vessel made of obsidian (tomb III)⁶⁰ carrying the throne name of Amenemhat III. have been discovered.⁶¹ At Neirab in western Syria, located some 30 km south-east of the city of Aleppo/Yamkhad, a

sphinx of Amenemhat III. was found. ⁶² The important coastal city of Ras Shamra/Ugarit apparently yielded one fragmented sphinx of the king in the courtyard of the temple of Baal (temple 1) among other Egyptian statuary of different periods. ⁶³ At Hazor in the upper Galilee a further sphinx of Amenemhat III. – albeit fragmented – was found in a cultic building dating to the Late Bronze Age. ⁶⁴ Finally, a fragmentary bowl with a scarab impression on the base bearing the throne name of King Amenemhat III. (*Nj-m3^c.t-R^c*) was recovered at Yoqne'am in northern Palestine. ⁶⁵

Most of these objects – if not all of them – seem to be found in contexts that cannot be attributed with certainty to the period of the 12th Dynasty, the Middle Kingdom or sometimes even the Middle Bronze Age (with the exception of Byblos). Without being able to determine an exact date of the objects' arrival in the Levant by way of stratigraphy – and this also holds true for almost all of the royal and non-royal Middle Kingdom statuary found in the northern Levant – it is impossible to draw far reaching historical conclusions concerning Egypt's relation with the eastern Mediterranean in the first half of the 2nd millennium BC

This evidence argues strongly against Helck's rather simplistic arguments for a supposed »Statuenhandel« pursued by the Hyksos alone, cf. Helck 1971: 68ff.; Helck 1976. However, his chronological observations and arguments concerning most of the Middle Kingdom statuary found in the northern Levant for the larger part still seem to be valid today.

As demonstrated by the date of the inscription and the destruction of the royal tomb. Thus, the supposed time-span for vessel MSH02G-i0834 is about 200 years (ca. 1530–1340 BC).

Other small finds (such as scarabs and cylinder seals) naming Amenemhat III. and coming from sites in the southern Palestine have been omitted here.

⁵⁹ Cf. Montet 1928: 162ff. and pls. XCIV, XCVII; Wein and Opificus 1963: 41, pl. 30.

⁶⁰ Cf. Montet 1928: 155 and cat.-no. 610, pls. LXXXVIII and LXXXIX.

Other small finds found at Byblos naming King Amenemhat III. include two cylindrical beads, cf. Dunand 1928: 185f., no. 2905, pl. CXXVII and 208f., no. 3107, pl. XXXVII.

⁶² Cf. Helck 1971: 68; Scandone Matthiae 1990. The sphinx is kept in the Archaeological Museum of Aleppo today.

 ⁶³ Cf. Schaeffer 1939: 223 and fig. 25; Helck 1971: 68;
 Helck 1976: 104; Ward 1979: 802f. and Scandone Matthiae 1984: 182ff.; 1989: 126f; 1996; 1997 and 2000. Schaeffer 1939 and Scandone Matthiae 1989:

^{126; 2000: 189} both mention the existence of two sphinxes. However, Helck 1976: 104, n. 39 apparently rightly states that only one sphinx of King Amenemhat III. was discovered in the courtyard of »temple 1« at Ras Shamra/Ugarit; the numerous fragments were obviously falsely attributed to two sphinxes at first, cf. WARD 1979: 802, n. 25 with further references. For the dating of its findspot cf. Ward 1961; Helck 1976; Ward 1979: 802f.; Helck 1995b. Ward's argumentation, however, in no way convincingly proves that the objects actually reached Ugarit during the Middle Kingdom (WARD 1979: 802f.). Giveon reports a cylinder seal naming Amenemhat III. from Ugarit, cf. GIVEON 1978: 80. Furthermore, there is one cylinder seal apparently bearing the throne name of Amenemhat III. from Cyprus, cf. Giveon 1978: 80. The context of the find is not clear.

⁶⁴ Cf. Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: 35f. and now Ben-Tor 2006. The context of the findspot, however, seems to be disturbed by later intrusions. I would like to thank Dr. S. Zuckerman for bringing this object to my attention and for providing the information.

For the site in general and the scarab impression cf. BIETAK 2000: 112 and BEN-TOR 2005: 361f. The bowl was recovered from a locus of a Late Bronze Age level. Ben-Tor notes that "the scarab used for the impression is significantly earlier, arguing against any association between the impressions and the 12th Dynasty king whose name it bears" (BEN-TOR 2005: 362).

based on these objects alone. The study of Egypt's foreign relations in the period of the Middle Kingdom with the eastern Mediterranean is to a large extend still hampered by the very fragmentary nature of the evidence and our limited knowledge of the historical situation at that time.⁶⁶

On the other hand, there may be reason to postulate that at least some of these objects were brought to the Levant sometime after the collapse of the Middle Kingdom. ⁶⁷ Much of the royal and non-royal statuary found in the Levant bear inscriptions (e.g. such as the *htp-dj-njswt*-formula or certain ambiguous epithets like *nb jm3h.w* ⁶⁸) that hint to the fact that these objects were originally conceived as being part of a typical offering

place, cultic chapel, cenotaph (hw.t-k3 and $m^ch^c.t$) or even tomb that served a funerary or religious purpose in Egypt – but surely not abroad.

This, e.g., also seems to be the case with the »Sphinx of Ita« (¬→ jrj.t-p^c.t s³.t njswt mr.t≥f n.t ½.t≥f Jt³ nb.t jm³ḫ.w) – daughter of King Amenemhat II. 69 – discovered within the royal palace of Qaṭna. 70 The sphinx made of schist was discovered broken into 400 fragments in the north-eastern part of the courtyard of the palace (the so-called »sanctuary«) which also revealed cuneiform tablets belonging to the »Inventory of the Temple of Bēlet-Ekallim«. 71 Close to the findspot of the sphinx a second – albeit fragmented – statue made of calcite-alabaster, apparently that of a kneeling

- ⁶⁷ Cf. Helck 1971 and 1976; Bietak 1998; Ryholt 1997: 139, n. 500 and 143ff.
- ⁶⁸ The epithet does not necessarily indicate that the person it describes was in fact deceased, cf. Doxey 1998: 100ff. However, for the majority of the attestations this may be suggested.
- ⁶⁹ Cf. Du Mesnil du Buisson 1928: 10; Fay 1996: 44ff. and Sabbahy 2003. For the statue of Ita's possible sister *Ḥnm.t-nfr-ḥd.t* at Ugarit cf. Schaeffer 1939: 20; Perdu 1977.
- The sphinx was found in the destruction level of the royal palace dating to the late 14th century BC. For the sphinx cf. Du Mesnil du Buisson 1928: 10f.; 1935b; Helck 1976: 108f.; Fay 1996: 30ff. and pls. 58–60. The sphinx is kept in the Louvre today; Louvre AO.13075. For the German excavations cf. Novák and Pfälzner 2000; 2001; 2002; 2003 and 2005.
- For the inventories roughly dating to the 15th century BC cf. BOTTÉRO 1949 and 1950.

Numerous minor and major studies have dealt with the nature of relations between Egypt and the Levant in the first half of the 2nd millennium BC. Keep in mind that the summary given here is by no means complete. For a general overview cf. HELCK 1971 and REDFORD 1992. Evidence for Egypt's economic relations with the Levant and even beyond - apparently also mentioning regions of Cilicia (the port of Ura »Jw3j«) and Cyprus (»J3sjj«) – is found on the blocks from the temple of Ptah at Memphis that contain parts of the annals of King Amenemhat II. of the 12th Dynasty; for the inscription and its historical interpretation cf. Altenmüller and Moussa 1991; Helck 1989; REDFORD 1992 and also QUACK 1992 and 1996, all with further references. Additionally, in his recent study of the »Tale of Sinuhe« (dating to the time of Sesostris I. or later?) Schneider 2002 comes to a new reading and understanding of the difficult passage B 219-B 223. According to him, the passage contains the first mention of the city of Qaṭna (i.e. Qaṭanum) as well as an attestation of the region later known as Kizzuwatna in Cilicia. Interestingly, an Egyptian statue of the nurse S3.t-Snfr.w was found at Tepebag Höyük (ancient Adana) in Cilicia, cf. Erman 1893 and DE Vos 2002: 46f. Although the statue was discovered in levels attributed to classical times, it probably reached Cilicia during the 2nd millennium. In Upper Egypt the socalled »Tôd Treasure« probably dating to time of King Amenemhat II. also clearly reflects the economic interaction between Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean in general, as do the corpora of texts known as »Achtungstexte« or »Execration Texts« of the late Middle Kingdom. For the el-Tôd Treasure, cf. BISSON DE LA ROQUE 1950; BISSON DE LA ROQUE et al. 1953; PORADA 1982 and HELCK 1995a: 14f. with further references; for an analysis of the execration texts cf. HELCK 1971: 44ff. The mastaba of Khnumhotep at Dashur (dating to the reign of Sesostris III.) yielded fragments of a text that relates to a conflict between Byblos and Ullaza, thus seemingly attesting direct Egyptian influence on the political system of the northern Levant; cf. WIMMER 2005: 131 (citing results

obtained by James P. Allen). For the mace of King Hotep-ib-Re of the 13th Dynasty found in the late Middle Bronze Age » Tomb of the Lord of the Goats« (Hypogeum C) at Tell Mardikh/Ebla and other Egyptian and Egyptianizing finds cf. Scandone MATTHIAE 1997. For egyptianizing elements in the Middle Bronze Age glyptic of the Levant cf. Teissier 1996. Furthermore, the excavations carried out at Tell el-Dabca and at various sites in the eastern Delta have brought to light a wealth of information concerning the asiatic population living in Egypt, cf. BIETAK and Hein 1994; Bietak 1996 with further references. New evidence for the relations between Egypt and the northern Levant was recently reported coming from Tell Siyannu on the Syrian Coast. Apparently, a cuneiform tablet dating to the Middle Bronze Age (unpublished) was found which mentions trade connections between the island of Cyprus and Egypt. For the tablet cf. Bretschneider et al. 2004: 219, n. 12; for late Middle Bronze Age wall paintings discovered at Tell Sakka cf. TARAQJI 1999. For the important new Egyptian finds at Sidon cf. FORSTNER-MÜLLER, KOPETZKY and DOUMET-SERHAL 2006; GRIFFITHS and OWNBY 2006 and DOUMET-SERHAL 2006.

king, was found. As the style and execution of this statue seems to be characteristic of the tradition of the Middle Kingdom, it could well be that the statue belongs to that period as well.⁷² Both objects, the sphinx and the statue were therefore probably displayed together and regarded by the rulers of Qaṭna as »items of prestige«.

The inscription placed between the paws (see above) and especially the term *nb.t jm3h.w* makes it likely that the sphinx originally derived from a funerary context. Additionally, in the years 1894/95 J. de Morgan explored the pyramid enclosure of King Amenemhat II. at Dashur and its close vicinity. Within the enclosure of the pyramid de Morgan found three tombs attributed to two princesses each, one of these tombs also belonging to princess Ita. ⁷³

The sphinx of Ita may therefore have originally come from a cultic building connected to her tomb at Dashur and then have been carried off to the Levant at a later date, although a more precise date cannot be given.⁷⁴

Returning now to the possible date of depostion of vessel MSH02G-i1632, from the royal tomb it could be that it reached also Qaṭna at a later date. Vast amounts of objects and monuments seem to have been looted from the main religious

center of the Fayyum, i.e. the temple of Sobek of Shedet, after the collapse of the Middle Kingdom adminstration and authority. This is exemplified by the monuments of King Amenemhat III. that were usurped and removed as early as the 15th Dynasty. The Although there is no direct indication or proof that the vessel found in the royal tomb of Qaṭna actually belongs to that group of objects, it is still a possibility not to be discarded straight away. Therefore, when trying to establish a date for the dispatchment of the vessel and its deposition within the royal tomb, a date sometime after the 12th Dynasty might seem plausible. The same administration of the vessel and its deposition within the royal tomb, a date sometime after the 12th Dynasty might seem plausible.

This is not to rule out the possibility that the vessel was a gift presented to the ruler of Qaṭna. An analysis of the objects dispatched by the Egyptians in the Amarna archives shows that Egpytian objects of a much earlier date were also being sent as gifts to the northern Levant and the kings of the so-called »Great Powers' Club«.⁷⁷

4.2 Objects of the Early 18th Dynasty in the Northern Levant

So far, vessel MSH02G-i0834 from the royal tomb is the only known example of an inscribed Egpytian object found in the northern Levant that can be attributed to the early 18th Dynasty. Addition-

⁷² For the second statue cf. Du Mesnil du Buisson 1928: 10 and 17; Helck 1976. A third Egyptian statue dating to the Middle Kingdom was discovered in a disturbed context in the north-eastern part of town. On the back pillar of the statue the offering-formula *htp-dj-njswt* can be read, cf. Du Mesnil du Buisson 1935: 45 and pl. VI, 1–4. For other Egyptian and Egyptianizing finds at Qaṭna cf. Al-Maqdissi 2001: 151 (scarab); Roccati 2002 (a fragment of a stone bowl naming Senwosret I.) and Ahrens 2003 (scarabs and scarab impressions).

⁷³ Cf. DE MORGAN 1903: 45ff. and pl. II; HELCK 1976; JÁNOSI 1994: 94ff. While some of the tombs within the pyramid enclosure seem to postdate Amenemhat II. and must be dated to the 13th Dynasty or later, the tomb of Ita, however, can be securely dated to the reign of Amenemhat II. The archaeological evidence for later additions and thus also possible intrusions into the older tombs may explain the "acquisition" of funerary equipment.

This idea was already put forward by HELCK 1971 and 1976. As mentioned before, it seems too simplistic to reduce this problematic question to the period of the Hyksos alone. Concerning the other Egyptian statues found at Qatna no further information can be given.

For the monuments attributed to King Amenemhat III. that seem to derive from Shedet and were usurped and removed from there cf. Verbovsek 2006: 72ff. Although a possible "connection" between these monuments and

the objects naming Amenemhat III. found in the northern Levant (see above, p. 25) seems appealing at first sight (especially in the case of the sphinxes), there is no way to prove this. For the Hyksos Khian at Boğazköy cf. Stock 1962.

There are signs of wear on vessel MSH02G-i1632 that might show that it had already been used for a longer period of time (see Figs. 3 and 6). These consist of a worn and roughened horizontal line around the vessel's lower part of the body, obviously a sign of long use caused by a separate stand (without which the dropshaped alabastron could not be securely fixed). However, no stand was discovered in the royal tomb and it seems likely that these signs of wear derive from a continuous and long period of use. However, this in no way can imply that the vessel was used at Qatna or the northern Levant for a longer period of time.

For the evidence revealed in the letters of the Amarna archive cf. Forstner-Müller *et al.* 2002: 156ff.; Phillips 1992 and Cochavi-Rainey 1999.

For a serpentinite vase bearing the cartouche of King Ahmose recovered from a Late Cypriote tomb at Palaepaphos-Teratsoudhia on Cyprus, cf. Harvey 1998: 79 with further references. The context of the vessel's findspot might well be contemporary with the 18th Dynasty, although not necessarily with the early part of that dynasty, cf. Jacobsson 1994: 20, 79.



Fig. 6 Stone vessels MSH02G-i0834 and MSH02G-i1632 (photo by G. Mirsch)

ally, stone vessels naming non-royal individuals are extremely rare in the northern Levant.⁷⁹

There is no way to say with certainty when the vessel actually reached the northern Levant and was finally deposited within the royal tomb. However, as has been argued above (see pg. 24), the vessel definitely must have reached the northern Levant in the course of the 18th Dynasty. If Chief Treasurer Nefer-peret was already deceased at the time the vessel was commissioned (and the vessel was thus part of his funerary equipment), it might be concluded that the vessel was looted from his tomb at a later time and then carried off to the Levant afterwards.⁸⁰

That the vessel might have been dispatched at a later date is is also supported by the fact that the Kings of the early 18th Dynasty (i.e. Kings Ahmose and Amenhotep I.⁸¹) most probably never really came into any direct contact with the northern Levant and its rulers but concentrated on southern Palestine trying to secure the north-eastern border of Egypt instead.⁸² It is only with King Thutmose I. and his intrusions into the regions under influence of the Mittani empire that the northern Levant becomes a main focus of Egyptian military and political attention again. The increased campaigns conducted in the northern Levant under King Thutmose I. and the following

⁷⁹ Cf. EDEL 1983: 38f. and cat. no. 98 for a stone vessel from Kāmid el-Lōz/Kumidi inscribed with the name of a certain *h3.tj-*^c *R*^c-wsr. It is unclear when the vessel reached the city as the vessel seems to be considerably older than than the inscription itself, the context of the find dates to the Late Bronze Age, cf. LILYQUIST 1994; 1996: pl. 28, 1–3; MIRON 1990: pl. 24, 1–3; for a stone vessel naming a »priest of Nefertem«, cf. EDEL 1983: 39; LILYQUIST 1996: pl. 29.

Of. PHILLIPS 1992 who states that "undoubtly the problem [i.e. the violation of tombs] was never entirely eradicated, even in the most politically stable and controlled reigns" (pg. 185).

⁸¹ Contra VANDERSLEYEN 1971: 90ff. However, cf. Redford 1979: 275f. and 1992: 148ff. and 150, fig. 16 for a possible military campaign of King Amenhotep I. into the

Levant (mentioning *Qdm*, *Twnjp* and *D3wny*). Nevertheless, it seems more plausible to attribute the blocks from the gate inscription at Karnak to the reign of King Thutmose I., cf. Bradbury 1985: 75ff. with further references. A different interpretation of the evidence – albeit historically difficult – has been put forward by LE SAOUT 1987: 325ff. and pls. I–III. Also, several calcite fragments apparently belonging to one vessel from tomb AN B at Drac Abû el-Naga mention the toponym *Qdm* (bearing the cartouche of Ahmose?; cf. LilyQuist 1995: 24; 85, fig. 23; Carter 1916). However, cf. Bradbury 1985: 75ff. for a different historical view (time of Thutmose I); also Redford 2003: 185ff.

¹² Cf. Weinstein 1981: 7; and Hoffmeier 1989: 185f.; 2004: 125ff.

kings on the other hand probably also led to a renewed interest in all things Egpytian and a growing demand for Egyptian objects among the northern levantine rulers.⁸³

Furthermore, the growing conflict between Egypt and the empire of Mittani, beginning with King Thutmose I. may well be the reason why numerous Egyptian objects were sent to the northern Levant: as the Egyptians were trying to regain a hold of the northern Levant the deliberate dispatchment of Egyptian objects – apart from the military campaigns conducted in western Asia - also served to tie the levantine rulers to the Egyptian foreign policy.⁸⁴ It thus becomes plausible to argue that vessel MSH02G-i-0834 most probably did not reach the Levant before the time of King Thutmose I., but rather at a later date in the 18th Dynasty as there is no convincing evidence for a direct contact between the early 18th Dynasty and the northern Levant so far. However, a more precise date for the vessel's dispatchment cannot be given, since its findspot gives only a terminus ante quem for its final deposition within the tomb.85

5. CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

Both vessels discovered in the royal tomb at Qaṭna add to the corpus of Egyptian imports found in the northern Levant (see Fig. 6). Apart from the historical value of the inscriptions for the reconstruction of Egyptian history as outlined above, the existence of these vessels within the royal tomb at Qaṭna also suggests that the vessels – including

other objects of Egyptian origin – were generally highly valued by the elites in the northern Levant because of their strong »emblematic« character. The acquisition of Egyptian objects with hieroglyphic script – often also displaying royal cartouches and insignia – was a legitimate and intriguing way for levantine rulers to emphasize, accumulate and substantiate their socio-political power. A real understanding of the hieroglyphs inscribed on these objects was obviously not necessary, as can be seen by the contents, meaning and purpose of most of the hieroglyphic inscriptions (and objects) found in the northern Levant.

The levantine rulers and the kings of Egypt maintained intercultural communication primarily through the mediation of »exotic« prestige goods and the exchange of correspondence. Although both vessels most probably reached the northern Levant (and Qaṭna) by means of a diplomatic mission – as is evidenced and exemplified by the numerous historical documents of the 2nd millennium BC – it is almost impossible precisely to date the time of their dispatchment on the basis of the inscriptions alone. In each case the specific »history« of the object must be assessed cautiously and also contextually.

This has to be kept in mind when trying to reconstruct the patterns of interaction and exchange mechanisms between Egypt and the northern Levant: the results might otherwise be misleading and heavily obscure the overall picture of the relations between Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean.

As is evidenced in the later part of the 18th Dynasty, cf. Panagiotopoulos 2000. In addition, the Amarna letters written by King Akizzi of Qaṭna (EA 51²/52–55) clearly reveal the interest of the ruler of Qaṭna in objects coming from Egypt, cf. Moran 1992: 122ff.

Egypt and the northern Levant can clearly be detected in the numerous historical documents of the 2nd millennium BC, especially in the letters of the Amarna archive, cf., e.g., Liverani 1990; Moran 1992; Bleiberg 1996: 90ff. and 115ff.; Cochavi-Rainey 1999; Cohen and Westbrook 2000 and recently Feldman 2006. For

the distribution of Egyptian stone vessels in the Levant cf. Sparks 2003.

Also on vessel MSH02G-i0834 signs of wear are clearly detectable: the broad flat-topped rim of the vessel has been modified and altered in the way that a part of the rim – which was probable damaged or had already partly broken off – was evenly smoothed (see Figs. 2 and 6). This modification may have been done in the Levant in order to enhance the vessel's outer appearance at the time the vessel arrived there although an earlier date is possible too.

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