

## Egypt and the Levant during the Old Kingdom

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This book\* by Karin N. Sowada is an extended and updated version of her 2002 doctoral dissertation presented at the University of Sydney.<sup>1</sup> It is the first comprehensive monograph on the contacts between Old Kingdom (OK) Egypt (3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> dynasties) and its eastern (and northern) neighbours. The work is mainly centred in the Levant during the Early Bronze Age (EBA) III-IV, but it also includes other regions such as Anatolia, Cyprus and the Aegean world. Unlike studies by other researchers, based on interpretations of a restricted and fragmentary range of textual, iconographic and tempting (but unreliable) out-of-context archaeological remains, Sowada's analysis is as innovative as important, since it is grounded basically on reliable archaeological evidence or, in other words, on materials discovered in clear archaeological contexts either in Egypt or the Levant. Actually, her "sceptical" stance on suspicious decontextualized evidence, that includes the use of archaeometric tools such as a PIXE-PIGME study of Levantine pottery from Egypt,<sup>2</sup> is the main virtue –among many others– of this study. As it will be stated below, through this premise, the book sheds newer and clearer light on the ever-complex problem of the contacts of Egypt with Levant during the EBA. In this regard, this work is a serious research, rather more rigorous and closer to the evidence than previous studies –as some by the reviewer himself– that are usually more centered in creating attractive, but more hypothetical and, consequently, weaker historical reconstructions.

The book is formed by eight chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography, different indices, two appendixes including the list of *aegyptiaca* from Montet's foundation deposits at Byblos (appendix I), and the results of a PIXE-PIGME study of combed ware jars from Egypt, made by Sowada and Peter Grave (University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia) (appendix II), and, finally, a section including a great number of figures and plates.

The first chapter, "1. Studies in Old Kingdom Foreign Relations: A Survey" (pp. 1-24), serves as an introductory study. It includes a very complete overview on the previous research of the connections between Egypt and Levant with a brief survey on the pictorial, textual and archaeological data connected to the subject. Furthermore, parameters of the research, along with employed methodologies –and their subsequent problems and advantages– are briefly, but efficiently explained. The author shows a

\* Karin N. Sowada, *Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean during the Old Kingdom: An Archaeological Perspective. With a contribution by Peter Grave* (Orbis Biblicus Orientalis, 237), Fribourg, Academic Press Fribourg – Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2009, pp. xxiv + 295 + 5 + 7 + 48 (figs.) + 19 (pls.) – ISBN: 978-3-7278-1649-9; 978-3-525-53455-7.

1. Karin N. Sowada, *Egypt in the Eastern Mediterranean during the Old Kingdom: A Re-appraisal of the Archeological Evidence*, Faculty of Arts, University of Sydney, 2002 (available at <http://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/4127> [2/9/2011]).

2. This kind of study permits to characterize materials by means of the measurement of proton induced X-rays (PIXE) and gamma rays (PIGME).

comprehensive knowledge of the evidence and bibliography and, at the same time, a great capacity for displaying and analysing them. Regrettably, she hasn't been able to include in her review of previous studies several textual records recently discovered that, no doubt, would have been relevant to her research: the still unpublished texts discovered by a French mission at Ain Soukhna mentioning sea-expeditions on Byblos-ships (kbnyt) from Ain Sukhna to the Sinai;<sup>3</sup> and the biographic text of a 6<sup>th</sup> dynasty official called *Iny* that has been recently reassembled by Michele Marcolin and the reviewer.<sup>4</sup> These texts mention several expeditions by this official to Byblos and the Lebanese area, and confirm, as it will be stated below, several conclusions and suspicions by the author. She has not been able to include some new readings of old texts either, as Khnumhetep's inscription at the tomb of Khui at Qubbet el-Hawa<sup>5</sup>. There are also some newly discovered iconographic depictions that, for the sake of completeness, can be mentioned in order to enrich Sowada's studies. In p. 201, there are some new parallels to the relief of "starving Asiatics" from the Unas causeway coming from the same monument and from Sahure's mortuary complex,<sup>6</sup> and the "apparent peaceful arrival of Asiatics" depicted in Sahure's causeway has also a close parallel in a scene from the same site depicting the arrival, with similar poses, of an Egyptian expedition to Punt.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the reviewer has studied a fragment of relief which could demonstrate the depiction of a siege scene in the Unas causeway, enriching the examples given by Sowada in pp. 111-112.<sup>8</sup>

The second chapter, "2. Patterns of Egyptian Foreign Relations in the EBA I and II" (pp. 25-53), as a prolegomenon to the OK contacts with its eastern neighbours, is a synthesis of the Egyptian connections in Canaan (i.e. Israel, Jordan and Palestine) from Naqada IIB phase to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> dynasty. Sowada

3. See the preliminary reports by P. Tallet, "Prendre la mer à Ayn Soukhna au temps du roi Isési", *BSFE* 177-178 (2010) 18-22; B. Midant-Reynes and S. Denoix, "Travaux de l'institut français d'archéologie orientale 2009-2010", *BIFAO* 110 (2010) 303-477 at 379.

4. M. Marcolin, "Iny, a much travelled official of the Sixth Dynasty. Unpublished reliefs in Japan", in M. Bárta, F. Coppens and J. Krejčí (eds.), *Abusir & Saqqara in the Year 2005*, Prague 2008, 282-310; *id.*, "Una nuova biografia egiziana della VI dinastia con iscrizioni storiche e geografiche", *Atti della Accademia delle Scienze di Torino, Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* 144 (2010) 43-79; and M. Marcolin and A. Diego Espinel, "The sixth dynasty inscriptions of Iny: more pieces to the puzzle", in M. Bárta, F. Coppens and J. Krejčí, *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2010. Volume 2*, Prague, 2011, 570-615. Iny's texts coincides in time with the discovery of the biography of Khnumhetep from his tomb at Dashur (12<sup>th</sup> dynasty) which also provides new perspectives on the Egyptian activities in the Levant during the Middle Kingdom. On this text, see J. P. Allen, "The historical inscription of Khnumhotep at Dahshur: a preliminary report", *BASOR* 352 (2008) 29-39; *id.*, "L'inscription historique de Khnumhotep à Dahchour", *BSFE* 173 (2009) 13-31. Other studies on OK texts related to Levantine connections have escaped Sowada's watchful eye. That is the case, for example, of comments on the OK Sinai inscriptions in E. Edel, *Beiträge zu den ägyptischen Sinaiinschriften*, Göttingen, 1983; and J. Baines and R. B. Parkinson, "An Old Kingdom record of an oracle? Sinai inscription 13", in J. van Dijk (ed.), *Essays on Ancient Egypt in Honour of Herman te Velde*, Groningen 1997, pp. 9-28; or the possible mention of an Egyptian campaign to the Levant in M. Baud and V. Dobrev, "Le verso des annals de la VI<sup>e</sup> dynastie. Pierre de Saqqara-Sud", *BIFAO* 97 (1997) 35-42 at 36-38, fig. 3 and photo 2.

5. See A. D. Espinel, "Minima epigraphica", *Discussions in Egyptology* 59 (2004) 7-20 at 15-18; and E. Edel, *Die Felsgräbernekropole der Qubbet el-Hawa Bei Assuan. I Abteilung. Band 3. Architektur, Darstellungen, Texte, archäologischer Befund und Funde der Gräber QH 102 – QH 209*, Paderborn 2008, p. 1528, n. 93.

6. See respectively, Y. Harpur, "Re-used Blocks in the Eighteenth Dynasty Tomb of Maya at Saqqara: A preview of nine reliefs from an unpublished corpus", in D. Magee, J. Bourriau and S. Quirke (eds.), *Sitting beside Lepsius. Studies in Honour of Jaromir Malek at the Griffith Institute*, Leuven/Paris/Dudley MA 2009, pp. 203-227 at 204-205, 222, fig. 1; T. el-Awady, *Abusir XVI: Sahure - The Pyramid Causeway. History and Decoration Program in the Old Kingdom*, Prague 2009, 202-203, fig. 93, pl. 9.

7. T. el-Awady, *Abusir XVI*, pp. 155-160, figs. 81a-b, pl. 5.

8. A. Diego Espinel, "Blocks from the Unas causeway recorded in Černý's notebooks at the Griffith institute, Oxford", in N. Strudwick and H. Strudwick, *Old Kingdom, new perspectives: Egyptian Art and Archaeology 2750-2150 BC*, Oxford 2011, pp. 50-70 at 61-62, fig. 9.

underlines the existence of several phases of commercial interaction defined previously by Levy and van den Brink.<sup>9</sup> During the first phases, exchanges between Egypt's and Canaan's elites increased, particularly in southern Canaan, via Sinai. Later, mainly from the so-called dynasty 0 to early 1<sup>st</sup> dynasty, Egyptians settled directly in the area approaching a trade network that reached further regions such as Galilee or the Lebanese coast. At the beginning of the EBA II, from the reigns of Aha to Djer, Egyptians retreated from southern Canaan for unknown reasons. The withdrawal coincided with several epigraphic attestations pointing to an increasing of Egyptian military activity in the area. From that moment on, Egyptian interactions with the Levant were mainly focused on Arad, in the northern Negev, which possibly was the main provider to Egypt of the so-called Abydos ware; northern Levant, according to the discovery of native raw materials and pottery in Egypt; and southern Sinai.<sup>10</sup> In this regard, unfortunately, the author couldn't include again in her study a recent published finding that provides new evidence on Egyptian activities (and supposed aggressiveness) in the peninsula: the graffiti of king Den and Semerkhet (or Sened?) at Wadi el-Humur, in Sinai, being the oldest written evidence of the Egyptian presence in the area.<sup>11</sup>

The following three chapters, "3. A corpus of imported material in Egypt" (pp. 54-90), "4. A corpus of Egyptian imports in Canaan" (pp. 91-127), and "5. A corpus of Egyptian imports in the northern Levant" (pp. 128-153), form a comprehensive and very useful group of *corpora* of the archaeological material connected to the Egyptian contacts with the Levant. They include some important unpublished material studied directly by the author: the Egyptian materials from Tell Yarmuth, or some Canaanite-shaped jars from Abusir. However, there are again some few significant additions to make to the exhaustive bibliography and to the lists of objects. From the moment that the text was submitted for publication several new findings and a wide range of studies have appeared enriching –and confirming– Sowada's ideas.

Concerning the bibliography, the book by An. Bevan on stone vessels in the Mediterranean couldn't be included.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, another important work by R. Th. Sparks on stone vessels in Middle and Late Bronze contexts published in 2007 is mentioned in the bibliography, but it seems to be a relative last minute addition, since it is, according to the reviewer's view, barely mentioned in the main text.<sup>13</sup> Regarding the objects mentioned in chapter 3, several publications on Canaanite pottery discovered at the

9. T. Levy and E.C.M. van den Brink, "Interaction models, Egypt and the Levantine periphery", in E.C.M. van den Brink and T. E. Levy (eds.), *Egypt and the Levant. Interrelations from the 4<sup>th</sup> through the Early 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C.E.*, London/New York 2002, pp. 3-38.

10. The author eludes the alleged contacts and influences between Egypt and Mesopotamia during this period. On this matter, based in extremely ambiguous evidences, see, for example, F. Guyot, "Structuration sociale et dynamisme des émulations interculturelles. Quelques considérations sur les contacts entre l'Égypte et la Mésopotamie au 4<sup>e</sup> millénaire", *Archéo-Nil* 14 (2004) 81-100, or Ph. Quenet, *Les échanges du nord de la Mésopotamie avec ses voisins proche-orientaux au III<sup>e</sup> millénaire (ca 3100-2300 av. J.-C.)*, Turnhout 2008, pp. 260-262. See, however, H. Wilde and K. Behner, "Salzherstellung im vor- und frühdynastischen Ägypten. Überlegungen zur Funktion der sogenannten Grubenkopfnägel in Buto", *MDAIK* 58 (2002) 447-460.

11. M. Rezk Ibrahim and P. Tallet, "Trois bas-reliefs de l'époque tinte au Ouadi el-Humur: aux origines de l'exploitation du Sud-Sinaï par les égyptiennes", *RdE* 59 (2008) 155-180; *id.*, "King Den in South-Sinai: the Earliest Monumental Rock Inscriptions of the Pharaonic Period", *Archéo-Nil* 19 (2009) 179-184. Several articles dealing with the contacts during the Early Dynastic have appeared recently. See, for example, M. Chłodnicki's paper and the contributions in the "Foreign relations" section in B. Midant-Reynes and Y. Tristant, *Egypt at its origins 2*, Leuven/Paris/Dudley MA 2008, pp. 489-500; 637-837; see the paper by E. Braun in R. F. Friedman and P. N. Fiske (eds.), *Egypt at its origins 3*, Leuven/Paris/Dudley MA 2011, pp. 975-1001; see also T. Bagh, "'Tributes' and the Earliest Pictorial representations of Foreign Oil and Wine Vessels", in Czerny *et al.* (eds.), *Timelines. Studies in Honour of Manfred Bietak. Volume II*, Leuven/Paris/Dudley MA 2006, pp. 9-23.

12. An. Bevan, *Stone vessels and values in the Bronze Age Mediterranean*, Cambridge 2007.

13. R. Th. Sparks, *Stone vessels in the Levant*, Maney 2007.

Egyptian sites of Giza, Abusir, Saqqara, Elephantine,<sup>14</sup> or Abydos can be included.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, in chapter 4, Sowada has overlooked a finding that, surprisingly, has escaped the eye of almost all the recent studies devoted to OK interconnections: several fragments of Egyptian vases of anorthosite gneiss discovered at Tell Afis (Syria) in EBA IV contexts.<sup>16</sup> Less significantly, she has also omitted, even though some studies mentioning these data are included in the bibliography, several OK and/or Early Dynastic stone vessels retrieved in Middle and Late Bronze Age archaeological levels at the Amman Temple, Tell Mevorakh, Tell Migne,<sup>17</sup> Kamid el-Loz, the “tomb of Goats” at Ebla, or, more recently, in the so-called “royal tomb” and “tomb VII” at Qatna.<sup>18</sup> Despite of being discovered in later contexts, these evidences could have been considered in the same way than other Egyptian stone vases mentioned by Sowada in sites such as Lachish (p. 103), Ugarit (p. 141),<sup>19</sup> Alalakh (p. 146), or the mysterious objects allegedly discovered in Anatolia near the Pactolous Valley and Dorak (p. 146).<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, in the Sinai section of Egyptian sites (p. 91 [105]), it should be noted that recently S. Parcak has detected several stone circles similar to the Tell Ras Budran fort, at the south of the Markha plain that could be also OK military enclosures. Since they haven’t been surveyed yet, it is impossible to advance any clear conclusion on their date and function.<sup>21</sup> Maybe these structures, along with Tell Ras Budran, could be connected to the *wnt*-structures mentioned by Sowada (pp. 13-14), being a reference either to Egyptian strongholds out of Egypt or, as Weni’s biography mentions, to Canaanite sites.<sup>22</sup>

Regarding the Cretan findings, again a book published after the manuscript’s submission is relevant here: Phillips’ improved version of her PhD thesis on Egyptian imports in Crete that Sowada used in her book.<sup>23</sup> It should be also noted the appearance of some recent articles connected to this matter by Colburn and, more indirectly, by Barrett.<sup>24</sup>

14. On this discoveries, see the bibliography provided by K. N. Sowada herself in a later article: “An Egyptian imitation of an imported two-handled jar from the Levant”, in D. Aston, B. Bader, C. Gallorini, P. Nicholson and S. Buckingham (eds.), *Under the potter’s tree. Studies on Ancient Egypt presented to Janine Bourriau of her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday*, Leuven/Paris/Walpole MA 2011, pp. 885-893. I am very grateful to the author for providing me a copy of the work. See also some additional information given by A. Wodzińska in her review to Sowada’s book in *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 3:1 (2011) 11-13 (available at <https://journals.uair.arizona.edu/index.php/jaei/article/view/96/98>).

15. Ch. Knoblauch, “Preliminary report on the EBA III pottery from contexts of the 6<sup>th</sup> dynasty in the Abydos Middle Cemetery”, *Ä&L* 20 (2010) 243-261.

16. See G. Scandone-Matthiae in St. Mazzoni and M. Cecchini, “Tell Afis (Siria) 1994 – Rapporto preliminare”, *EVO* 18 (1995) 243-306 at 257-258, fig. 13, pl. 13. No new fragments have been discovered at the site so far. I am very grateful to St. Mazzoni for this information.

17. On these three findings see, e.g., Sparks, *Stone vessels*, pp. 50-52, fig. 14.

18. On bibliography of these objects see, e.g., A. Ahrens, “A journey’s end – two Egyptian stone vessels with hieroglyphic inscriptions from the royal tomb at Tell Mishrife/Qatna”, *Ä&L* 16 (2006) 15-36 at 18, n. 11; see also *id.*, “A stone vessel of princess Itakayet of the 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty from tomb VII at Tell Misrife/Qatna (Syria)”, *Ä&L* 20 (2010) 15-29 at 16.

19. On a recent overview of *aegyptiaca* from Ugarit, see A. Caubet and M. Yon, “*Ougarit et l’Égypte*”, in Czerny *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-95.

20. Quenet, *op. cit.*, 266-267, mentions some possible –but rather improbable– Egyptian influences in EBA sites of Mari and Tell Banat.

21. S. Parcak, “The sceptical remote sencer: Google Earth and Egyptian archaeology”, in S. Ikram and I. Dodson (eds.), *Beyond the Horizon: Studies in Egyptian art, archaeology and history in honour of Barry J. Kemp. Volume II*, Cairo 2009, 362-382, at 364, figs. 1-4.

22. On attestations of the “overseer of the wenets” office (*imy-r wnw*), see, for example, D. Jones, *An index of ancient Egyptian titles, epithets and phrases of the Old Kingdom. Volume I*, Oxford 2000, p. 103, no. 418.

23. J. Phillips, *Aegyptiaca on the island of Crete in their chronological context: a critical review*, Wien 2008; see also *id.*, “Why? ... and why not? Minoan reception and perceptions of Egyptian influence”, in Czerny *et al.* (eds.), *Timelines*, pp. 293-300.

24. C. S. Colburn, “Exotica and the Early Minoan Elite: Eastern Imports in Prepalatial Crete”, *AJA* 112 (2008) 203-224; *id.*, “Egyptian gold in Prepalatial Crete? A consideration of the Evidence”, *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 3:3 (2011)

The following chapters, “6. Imported Ceramics in Egypt and their origins” (pp. 154-182), “7. “The Egyptian-Levantine commodities trade” (pp. 183-209), and “8. The Egyptian-Levantine trade in manufactures goods” (pp. 210-244), examine critically the different materials which served as articles of commerce between Egypt and Canaan. Chapter 6 deals exclusively with the Canaanite pottery discovered in Egypt. It includes an overview of previous studies and a complete analysis of the potteries comprising their typologies, their iconographic depictions on Egyptian art,<sup>25</sup> their possible contents, or their possible modes of transportation. Here, two sections are underlined. First, Sowada’s study on distribution patterns of imported ceramics –mainly combed ware– in space and time shows that the bulk of the pottery arrived to Egypt in the 4<sup>th</sup> dynasty. During this period their distribution was restricted to necropolis connected to royal pyramids as Meydum, Dashur and, above all, Giza. Later, from the early 5<sup>th</sup> dynasty, vessels started to appear in the provinces (as the newly findings at Abydos confirm), but again, most of them were deposited in the Memphite area (Giza, Abusir and Saqqara). Sowada (p. 180) suggests that diffusion out of Memphis “may likewise represent a reduction in state control over the fruits of foreign missions”. On the contrary, as the findings of Canaanite pottery at Abydos point out, this distribution could be explained because Egyptian administration was more flexible and the state and its accomplishments could arrive further than the royal court, for instance, by means of the participants in expeditions abroad. For example, Abydos vessels were found in three mastabas owned by important officials. Actually, one of them, Weni, was a courtier involved in a military expedition to the Levant.

Second, this chapter, along with Appendix II (pp. II.1-II.7), includes a recent overview of several Neutron Activation Analysis (NAA) and PIXE-PIGME studies, some of them made by the author herself and Peter Grave, of Levantine pottery from different Egyptian and Canaanite sites. Leaving aside the question of some Egyptian imitations, mainly detected at Abusir,<sup>26</sup> pottery provenances confirm previous studies on the role of Byblos/northern Syria as an important trade centre. Other provenances, moreover, have been detected in central Levant, southern Canaan and Cilicia. It should be noted that editors by accident have omitted table 12 in p. II.8. The reviewer has been able to include it in these pages by kind courtesy of the author.

Chapter 7 deals with a study on the commodities traded between Egypt and Canaan. Among the wide range of imports arrived to the Nile, Sowada includes, for example, lapis lazuli, copper and turquoise, silver, animals, olive oil, wine, different kinds of timbers, or slaves,<sup>27</sup> but as she states, the lack of technical analysis on these supposed imported materials, and the reduced information of textual and iconographic evidence are the main obstacles for determining with certainty actual trade goods and their provenances. Fortunately, the aforementioned biography of Iny, being reassembled by Michele Marcolin and the reviewer currently, permits to confirm the purchase by the Egyptians of certain Levantine commodities and their purveyors. At the moment, the retrieved text includes the mention of several missions by this official to the eastern Mediterranean coast in order to get several products. In his first attested trip to the Levant, Iny mentions “(...) I did Amaaw (*amAAw*), Khenty-She (*xnty-S*, Lebanese

1-13; C. E. Barrett, “The perceived value of Minoan and Minoanizing Pottery in Egypt”, *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 22/2 (2009) 211-234; see also Bevan, *Stone vessels and values*, pp. 93-99.

25. Depictions of the Egyptian containers of the sacred oils could also be useful in order to detect new examples to the Egyptian representations of foreign pottery shapes mentioned by Sowada (pp. 158-160). See, e.g., B. Gilli, “Le rappresentazioni dei vasi per gli oli sacri a Saqqara nella VI dinastia”, *KASKAL* 3 (2006) 31-67, for possible examples (not identified by Gilli as foreign pottery).

26. Recently the author has confirmed another example from Ballas, see Sowada, “An Egyptian imitation” (see n. 14).

27. For later parallels on this subject, see S.J. Larkman, “Human cargo: Transportation of Western Asiatic People during 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty”, *JSSEA* 34 (2007) 107-113.

coast?) and Pawes[...] (*pAwS*[...]) four times, while I was sealbearer of the god under the Majesty of Pepy (I), my lord. I brought him silver and every good produce his *ka* desired and his Majesty praised me for it very greatly”. The text is followed immediately by another expedition sent by Pepy’s I successor: “I was sent to Byblos (*kbn*) under the majesty of Merenre, my lord. I brought back three (?) Byblos-ships and [I made (?)] the great ships of the court. I brought back lapis lazuli, lead/tin (*DHty*), silver, *sft*-oil and every good product his *ka* desired. I was praised for it into the court and gold rewards were given to me. I went down to Byblos from Ra-Hat (*r(A)-HAt*, i.e. a port in the Nile Delta?) and I came back safely. Never was the like done by any expedition leader that any god sent formerly (...).” Finally, in a second biographic inscription, Iny mentions: “(...) the majesty of Neferkare (i.e. Pepy II), my lord, sent me to Khenty-She. I brought (back) one Byblos-ship and several/three *imww*-cargo-ships loaded with silver, *aamu*-men and *aamu*-women. The majesty of my lord praised me (...).”

In few lines, Iny’s texts permit to prove the Levantine provenance of several materials listed by Sowada. From Byblos, Iny mentions the import of wood in the form of ships, lapis lazuli, lead or tin, silver and *sft*-oil (determined by a two-handled Combed Ware-shaped jar). From other areas, mainly from Khenty-She, he mentions again wood (boats), silver and human cargo. According to these mentions the Lebanese coast and, above all, Byblos are confirmed, as Sowada and other authors have suggested, as important middlemen between Egypt and the Near Eastern trade nets that extended from Afghanistan or India to the Nile Valley. Iny’s list and recent studies also permit to precise several aspects arisen by Sowada on Levantine products. For example, the possibility of translating *sTt j* (“Asiatic copper”) as tin (pp. 187-188) is minimized by the oldest mention of *DHty* in Iny’s text.<sup>28</sup> On the other side, the *sft*-oil (pp. 198-200) has been translated recently by Bardinet as a generic term for any kind of substance made of resins mixed or dried with flax oil.<sup>29</sup>

Unfortunately, Iny didn’t precise the Egyptian exports destined to the trade with Levant and, consequently, the list of products from the Nile valley remains more dubious than the former one: raw stones and shells, gold, foodstuffs, and animals products (ivory, ostrich egg shells, etc). The most visible Egyptian exports to the Levant, the manufactured goods, are studied in chapter 8. The main item, the stone vessels, are analysed taking into account the many difficulties that this kind of evidences exhibits (see also pp. 16-18 in the introduction). Sowada’s usual scepticism on the historical interpretation of the data provided by these vases is centred mainly in the stone vessels discovered at Byblos and, more logically, in Crete. Concerning Byblos, she denies any kind of proofs of the cult of Hathor at the Lebanese port during the third millennium BCE (pp. 218-222), but she does not even mention some small pieces of inscriptional evidence raised by the reviewer that could permit to reconsider the existence of this cult during the 6<sup>th</sup> dynasty despite of being discovered out of EBA archaeological contexts.<sup>30</sup> On the contrary, she is not too sceptical on possible direct commercial and/or diplomatic contacts between Egypt and Ebla. Actually, she thinks that Egypt could be mentioned in the Eblaite archives following the much-contested interpretation

28. On some mentions of *sTt j* as “Asiatic copper” in OK Egyptian texts not mentioned by Sowada, see, e.g., P. Posener-Kriéger (+), M. Verner and H. Vymazalová, *Abusir X. The pyramid complex of Raneferef. The papyrus archive*, Prague 2006, pp. 244-246, 248.

29. Th. Bardinet, *Relations économiques et pressions militaires en Méditerranée orientale et Libye au temps des pharaons*, Paris 2008, 215; see also B. Koura, *Die “7-Heiligen Öle” und andere Öl- und Fettamen*, Aachen 1999, pp. 177-180. There are other interpretations, however. R. Germer, *Handbuch der altägyptische Heilpflanzen*, Wiesbaden 2008, 48, thinks it is a resinous product from the *aS*-tree; for a similar idea see M. Serpico, “Resins, amber and bitumen”, in P. T. Nicholson and I. Shaw (eds.), *Ancient Egyptian material and technology*, Cambridge 2000, 430-474, at 464.

30. A. Diego Espinel, “The role of the temple of Ba<sup>c</sup>alat Gebal as intermediary between Egypt and Byblos during the Old Kingdom”, *SAK* 30 (2002) 103-119 at 109-110, fig. 2a-b.

by Pettinato of the toponym *DU<sup>ki</sup> DU<sup>ki</sup>* as “Egypt”.<sup>31</sup> Even though Iny’s inscriptions point that Egyptian activities in the East were more intense than thought, a direct contact between Ebla and Egypt should be regarded cautiously as a remote possibility. Egyptian vases, more feasibly, would arrive to Ebla from Byblos, apparently the main intermediary between the Nile Valley and the Syrian states.

Along with the vases, Sowada studies other possible *aegyptiaca* such as slate palettes, faience objects, textiles or furniture, for instance. She also considers several Egyptian architectural features as possible proofs of contacts between Egypt and Levant. The more plausible example would be the use of the Egyptian cubit in the planning of several EBA elite buildings at Tel Yarmuth and Megiddo.<sup>32</sup> In the opposite direction, it should be stressed that recently Bietak has detected some Canaanite features in the planning of the OK/EBA III temple at Tell Ibrahim Awad in the eastern Nile Delta.<sup>33</sup>

The final section, “Conclusion: A revised view of Egyptian relations with the Levant in the Old Kingdom – EB III/IV” (pp. 245-255) is an excellent synthesis of the historical development of the contacts between both regions from the predynastic-EBA I to the end of the OK – EB III/IV.

The author has detected along the book several minor mistakes, some of them connected to the transcription of Egyptian terms. Here there are the most significant ones: p. 9 mentions *kbn wnt* instead of *kbn wnTt*; p. 12, *n ˆia* instead of *n ˆiA*; p. 31, Ogden instead of Ogdon; or p. 200, 70,000 instead of 7000. In any case, these mistakes can be explained because of the quantity of data mentioned by the author.

Summing up, Sowada’s study is an excellent work destined to be the main study on OK contacts with the Levant for long, even though this is an ever-developing subject of study.<sup>34</sup> As a historian attached to the written evidence, the reviewer considers that if some kind of criticism can be levelled at this book, it would be connected to the relative absence of comments and interpretations of the Egyptian textual and epigraphic evidence. This secondary –but in any case not marginal– use of the texts and images is, however, its main virtue too. Regrettably, Egyptology studies continue to be too tied to the written evidence, and more strict archaeological approaches still remain secondary, notwithstanding the extremely rich range of material culture retrieved in the Nile Valley and the neighbouring regions, and the many informative possibilities they can provide through pertinent archaeometric analyses. For this very reason, this book will remain as a pivotal work in the historiography on the subject. Furthermore, *insha’allah*, it will open, with its mixture of well-balanced scepticism to the written and iconographic evidences, and of

31. See M. Bonechi, *Répertoire géographique des textes cuneiforms. Band 12/1. I nomi geografici dei testi di Ebla*, Wiesbaden, 1993, 105; and A. Archi, P. Piacentini and F. Pomponio, *I nomi di luogo dei testi di Ebla (ARET I-IV; VII-X e altri documenti editi e inediti)*, Roma, 1993, where Pettinato’s interpretation is not even considered.

32. In this regard, the reviewer has to point out that his previous date of the so-called *relief de la maisonette* at Byblos to the OK in Diego Espinel, *SAK* 30, pp. 106-107, fig. 1, should be considered with extreme caution since he currently thinks it is a later object.

33. M. Bietak, “The Early Bronze Age III temple at Tell Ibrahim Awad and its relevance to the Egyptian Old Kingdom”, in Z. Hawass, P. der Manuelian and R. B. Hussein, *Perspectives on Ancient Egypt. Studies in honor of Edward Brovarski*, Cairo 2010, pp. 65-77.

34. See, for example, these recent proceedings of several conferences connected to this matter: M. Bietak and E. Czerny (eds.), *The Bronze Age in the Lebanon: studies on the archaeology and chronology of Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt*, Wien 2008; *Interconnections in the Eastern Mediterranean. Lebanon in the Bronze and Iron Ages. Proceedings of the international symposium, Beirut 2008*, Beirut 2009; J. Mynářová (ed.), *Egypt and the Near East – the Crossroads: proceedings of an international conference on the relations of Egypt and the Near East in the Bronze Age, Prague, September 1-3, 2010*, Prague 2011; K. Duistermaat and I. Reguluski, *Intercultural contacts in the ancient Mediterranean. Proceedings of the International Conference at the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo, 25<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> October 2008*, Leiden/Paris/Dudley MA 2011; or the celebration of the recent conference “Egypt and the Southern Levant in the Early Bronze Age: C14, chronology, connections” held at Berlin, where the author herself has participated.

confidence on accurate analyses of the archaeological evidence, a more trustworthy path in the research on the international contacts in the EBA.

P. S. Along with the recent discoveries at Ain Sukhna, an IFAO mission has recently identified at Wadi al-Jarf a new harbour in the Egyptian Red Sea coast, 90 km south of the former site, dated to the 4th and early 5th dynasties. Due to its location, exactly opposite to the fortress of Tell Ras Budran, in the Sinai shore, this place could be identified as the point of departure of early Old Kingdom maritime expeditions to the Sinai. On this new site, only preliminarily surveyed and excavated, see P. Tallet and G. Marouard, "An early pharaonic harbour on the Red Sea coast", *Egyptian Archaeology* 40 (2012), 40-43.

