More than people and pots: identity and regionalization in Ancient Egypt during the second intermediate period, ca. 1775-1550 BC

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ENGLISH SUMMARY

This PhD dissertation examines the relationships between sites in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period (ca. 1750 and 1550 BC). This period was characterized by political divisions and by regionalized material culture, as well as by the presence of groups from modern-day Syria-Palestine and Nubia that managed to acquire considerable power and play an important role in Egyptian society.

The Second Intermediate Period is also characterized by the scarcity of written documents. As a result, there is still much debate about the political situation during this period and about the succession of kings and dynasties. Following a discussion of the relevant literature and discussions about this subject, as well as about the absolute dates, I have chosen the following chronological framework (chapter 2). I consider the Second Intermediate Period to begin with the rise of the Fourteenth Dynasty in Lower Egypt, in the second half of the Thirteenth Dynasty (ca. 1775 BC). I divide the Second Intermediate Period in the Early Second Intermediate Period, up to the end of the Fourteenth Dynasty, and in the Late Second Intermediate Period, after the end of the Fourteenth Dynasty and until the rise of the Eighteenth Dynasty (ca. 1550 BC). I have not considered the rise of the Fifteenth Dynasty, because the new finds from Edfu cast doubts about when it should be dated and make it not a reliable chronological criterion for the beginning of the Late Second Intermediate Period. On the contrary, I consider the rise of the different dynasties in Upper Egypt – i.e. the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Dynasty, as well as the Abydos Dynasty (whose existence is accepted here) – the main criterion to determine the start of the Late Second Intermediate Period. The rise of these dynasties indicates, in my opinion, the emergence of new political powers that possibly caused changes in the material culture, having an impact on the regionalization process. The present work also includes an analysis of the material culture of the Late Middle Kingdom, meaning the Twelfth Dynasty after the reign of Senwosret III and the Thirteenth Dynasty until the reign of Merneferra Ay (who is the last king to be attested both in Lower and Upper Egypt). This is done because this period includes already has features that

characterize the Second Intermediate Period. This also helps to better understand the onset of the Second Intermediate Period and the change it involved.

The aim of the present work is to study the regionalization processes and the relationships between the different areas and sites in a period of political turmoil in Egypt, through a systematic study of the material culture. As discussed in Chapter 3, I define a region as an area whose sites are usually geographically close each other and share similar developments in the material culture during the period under consideration. I consider a group of sites to be part of the same region if the strata dated to the Second Intermediate Period contain objects with a similar style, distinguishable from the styles of the Middle Kingdom and of the New Kingdom, and if the style of the New Kingdom appears in archaeological strata whose dating is contemporary. I define style as the shapes, surface decorations and treatments, and techniques that characterize objects in a specific space and period. Concerning the Second Intermediate Period, the matter of regionalization has been examined in earlier scholarship mostly through the study of pottery. Six possible regions have thus been identified: the Eastern Delta, the Memphis-Fayyum area, Middle Egypt, the area around Thebes, Elephantine, and the oasis in the Western Desert (the oasis of Kharga, Dakhla, and Bahariya). In the present work, the focus is on small finds: beads, stone vessels, metal weapons, scarabs and seals. Two types of pottery, the Tell el-Yahudiyah pottery and the Cypriot pottery, have been included in the analysis, because they shed light on relationships with communities from the Eastern Mediterranean and on their possible presence in Egypt.

Regarding the latter aspect, Chapter 4 emphasizes that ethnicity is difficult to get a handle on using archaeology. Firstly, as in the debate on the later phenomenon of "Romanization", there is the risk of focusing too much on a simplistic binary opposition between "Egyptian" and "non-Egyptian", where non-Egyptian includes Asiatics, Nubians and Cypriots. Secondly, there is the risk of simplifying interactions as merely acculturation and assimilation: these attribute only a passive role to non-Egyptian communities, and they ignore more complex and nuanced processes of cultural interaction. Moreover, not all objects new to Egyptian traditions carried ethnic meaning: the imported objects, or their imitations, and the regionalization processes, may have had other reasons, including economic and political ones. All in all, Egypt was part of a connected world. For all these reasons, I regard the assemblages of objects not as signifiers of ethnic groups, but of entire networked systems, of smaller or larger scale, which include political, religious, social, and cultural groups as well. My focus is on how the objects circulated and which relationships they indicate, and how the objects originating outside Egypt took part in networks of contact and exchange. Instead of disentangling ethnicities,

I explore how material culture was used at a local level and how places and objects were interconnected.

To understand the relationships between sites during the SIP and the regionalization processes, this research focuses on the types of objects that the sites have in common. A type is defined as an object of specific shape and specific material. The central assumption is that the closer the contacts were between two or more sites, the more similar the material culture became. As a consequence, sites where similar objects have been excavated had close contacts and were probably part of the same region. To achieve this, the methods of network analysis have been applied, which are discussed in Chapter 5. Network analysis enables us to analyse the relationships, and the circulation of objects, or ideas, or fashions, or knowledge between several entities on the basis of what they have – or do not have – in common. This analysis is conducted using digital tools, which allow us both to elaborate graphs, which visualize the relationships and the networks, and to calculate mathematical expression, which examine the role(s) of each entity in the network. In the present dissertation, the entities examined are the sites, and their relationships are detected on the basis of the types of objects that they have in common. The data were collected from archaeological material already published, although two major problems have been encountered. Firstly, the archaeological contexts considered for the study can be disturbed by past activities, or can be difficult to date. Secondly, the contexts studied do not form the complete sample, but only what has been excavated and published so far; therefore, the dataset is a partial one and data are lacking. As a consequence, there is the risk of archaeological bias, namely over-representing or under-representing sites based on the available data. To tackle these issues, only contexts with secure dates have been included in the analysis, and only the presence/absence of objects at the sites has been considered, without counting the amount of contexts where the objects have been found.

The last introductory chapter, Chapter 6, deals with the materials used to produce the objects examined in the present dissertation. I focus on their physical and chemical characteristics, on the location of their source in Egypt, or from where they were imported into Egypt, and on their traditional nomenclature in Egyptology and in the present work. In particular, what are traditionally referred to as schist and blue marble, in the present dissertation are respectively referred to as siltstone and anhydrite, while calcite-alabaster is used in the present work to indicate what is traditionally called alabaster in Egyptology.

The first chapter dedicated to the analysis of objects is Chapter 7, which deals with the beads. During the Late Middle Kingdom, the major players in the circulation of beads appear to be sites in Middle and Upper Egypt, and

especially the sites in the Memphis-Fayyum area. This means that the beads could be made and shipped from there, or destined to these places, and also new trends could start from there. This is not surprising, considering that most resources come from the central and southern Egyptian Eastern Desert and that the capital was located in the Memphis-Fayyum area. Dakhla Oasis, Deir el-Ballas, Tod, and Tell el-Dab'a appear to be possible passageways or (re)distribution centres in the circulation of beads. During the Early Second Intermediate Period, Tell el-Dab'a, Harageh, Qau el-Kebir, and Dakhla Oasis appear to be the major plyers on the circulation of beads. There appear to be connections between Tell el-Dab'a, Middle Egypt and Abydos, while the contacts with the southern part of Upper Egypt would pass both through Harageh, Dakhla Oasis, and Abydos. At the same time, Edfu and Tod look like passageways or (re)distribution centres in the network of beads, probably because the materials used for beads come mostly from the Eastern Desert in Upper Egypt, therefore they could be channelled through these sites. Given that part of the material that connects the sites during this period is found in tombs ascribed to the Nubian or Pan-grave culture, it is possible that these groups had a role in the circulation of the beads. During the Late Second Intermediate Period, Tell el-Dab'a, Sedment, Mostagedda, Qau el-Kebir, and the Theban area look like the major players in the circulation of beads. Tell Hebua seem to have been a passageway or (re)distribution centre in the network of beads. Tell el-Maskhuta, Lisht, Matmar, Balabish, Abydos, and Hu seem have in common a great part of their material culture with other sites, but this part included the more common types only in a minor quantity. Tell el-Dab'a was in contact mostly with the sites in Middle Egypt and Sedment. Also the Theban area seems to be in contact with the sites in Middle Egypt, as well as with Tell el-Dab'a. All in all, the contacts between Lower and the southern part of Upper Egypt appear to pass both through the desert and through Middle Egypt and Abydos.

The stone vessels are analysed in Chapter 8. The results show that during the Late Middle Kingdom, Harageh, Rifeh, Abydos, Hu, Esna, and Edfu were major sites in the circulation of stone vessels. Dahshur, Riqqeh, Hawara, Lahun, Qasr el-Sagha, and Ballas have many types in common, but these do not include the most common types. Again, the sites that seem to have a role in the circulation of stone vessels are in the Memphis-Fayyum area and in Upper Egypt. Matmar, Qau el-Kebir, and Denderah appear to be passageways or (re)distribution centres in the network of stone vessels; this suggests that the circulation of vessels was passing through those sites on its way to and from the Memphis-Fayyum area. During the Early Second Intermediate Period, the stronger connections in the network of stone vessels are between Tell el-Dab'a and Edfu, while the latter is also connected to Abydos and, through

this, to Tod. All in all, Tell el-Dab'a, Edfu, and Abydos appear to have a major role in the circulation of stone vessels. During the Late Second Intermediate Period, the sites in Lower Egypt appear to be in contact with the sites in the southern part of Upper Egypt mostly through the sites in Middle Egypt. The sites of Tell Hebua, Sedment, Mostagedda, and Qau el-Kebir were major sites in the circulation of stone vessels; Tell Hebua had also the role of an intermediary. Hu and Matmar have a great part of their types of stone vessels in common with other sites, but this part did not include the more common types.

In Chapter 9, the impressions from scarabs and seals are examined. The results demonstrate that during the Late Middle Kingdom, the sites of Lisht, Lahun, Harageh, Esna, Nubt, Elephantine had a main role in the circulation of the designs. This circulation appears to rely mostly on sites in the Memphis-Fayyum area and the southern part of Upper Egypt. Therefore, these were the sites where the designs used on scarab and seal designs, hence the objects themselves, could be produced and sent from, or sent to. Perhaps this is because Lisht, Lahun, and Harageh were in the area of the capital in that period, and that Elephantine was an important position to enter Nubia. Edfu and Ballas look like passageways or (re)distribution centres in the same network. During the Early Second Intermediate Period, Tell el-Dab'a and Abydos are the only two sites connected through the scarab and seal designs, while Dakhla Oasis and Qau el-Kebir appear isolated in this network. This could suggest a more localized circulation of scarab and seal designs. During the Late Second Intermediate Period, Tell el-Dab'a, Tell el-Yahudiyah, and Sedment appear to play a role in the circulation of scarab and seal designs. Tell el-Maskhuta, Rifeh, and Mostagedda have a great part of their types of designs in common with other sites, but this part did not include the more common types. Abydos seem to be a site where the designs, or even the objects themselves, where channelled through. All in all, during this period contacts were mostly between the sites in the Delta and the ones in Middle Egypt, while contacts between Lower and the southern part of Upper Egypt passed, mostly, by Sedment, Abydos and, in a lesser way, Dakhla Oasis.

Chapter 10 is dedicated to the analysis of the Tell el-Yahudiyah ware. The results indicate that, during the Late Middle Kingdom, the sites of Lahun, Lisht and, possibly, Harageh were the places where the Tell el-Yahudiyah ware was mostly circulating. This is not surprising, because the sites are mostly located in the Memphis-Fayyum area, the area of the capital during the period. Tell el-Dab'a played a role of a passageway or (re)distribution centre in the circulation of the Tell el-Yahudiyah ware. All in all, the circulation of this ware during this period involves mostly sites in Lower and Egypt and the Memphis-Fayyum area. During the Early Second Intermediate Period, the only connections detected through the network of the Tell el-Yahudiyah ware

are between Tell el-Dab'a and respectively Memphis and Abydos. During the Late Second Intermediate Period, the sites of Tell el-Yahudiyah and, possibly, Harageh, Rifeh, and Abydos appear to be the sites where the Tell el-Yahudiyah ware was sent to or from. All in all, the circulation of this ware seems to involve mostly sites in Lower and Middle Egypt. Again, Tell el-Dab'a seem to be the place where the Tell el-Yahudiyah ware would be channelled through.

Chapter 11 examines the Cypriot pottery. Before the Late Second Intermediate Period, it includes nearly only imported vessels. Tell el-Dab'a appear to be the main, or even only Egyptian site in contact with Cyprus. However, Cypriot pottery does not create further links between Tell el-Dab'a and the other Egyptian sites. Only few specimens during the Late Middle Kingdom are found outside Tell el-Dab'a, and only in the area of the capital of the time, namely the Memphis-Fayyum area. During the Late Second Intermediate Period, Tell el-Dab'a, and probably also Tell el-Maskhuta, Sedment, Tarkhan, and Abydos played a special role in the circulation of Cypriot pottery, which focuses, all in all, on the Nile Delta and the Memphis-Fayyum area. All in all, the analysis of Cypriot pottery still shows strong contacts between Tell el-Dab'a and Cyprus, and weak connections between Tell el-Dab'a and the other Egyptian sites.

The last chapter dedicated to the analysis of objects is Chapter 12, on metal weapons. The results show that, during the Late Middle Kingdom, the sites of Tell el-Dab'a, Lahun, and Hu had a special role in the circulation of the weapons. Two groups have been detected, of which one formed by Tell el-Dab'a, Esna, and Lisht, and one formed by Hu, Qau el-Kebir, and Lahun. This could reflect communities with two different social practices, even though, given the small number of objects, further analysis before taking this conclusion further. During the Early Second Intermediate Period, only Tell el-Dab'a and Hu are connected, through only one type of knife. During the Late Second Intermediate Period, two groups have been identified again. The first of these groups involves the sites in Lower Egypt and focuses on Tell el-Maskhuta, Tell el-Dab'a and Tell el-Yahudiyah, which are known to have a similar material culture in common, influenced by features traditionally associated with Syria-Palestine. The second group involves the sites in Middle Egypt, especially where communities of the Pan-grave culture are attested, and focuses on Mostagedda, Qau el-Kebir, and Balabish. The mentioned sites appear to play a special role in the circulation of metal weapons. The Theban area has no connections to other sites, thus appear to be a third, separate cluster. Considering that weapons come mostly from graves, where they were deposited as burial equipment, the situation described could derive from different burial customs.

After examining the objects, the distribution of the materials is studied in Chapter 13. It appears that during the Late Middle Kingdom, lithic ma-

terials were widely distributed and transported also far from their sources. However, especially when concerning the precious and imported stones, they were channelled through the Memphis-Fayyum area, where they were probably transported as raw materials and worked into finished objects in the royal workshops in the area. The very widespread stones usually show a more localized production. Among metals, only gold appear to have been worked in royal workshops in the Memphis-Fayyum area, probably because of its preciousness, while silver, which likely was imported and entered Egypt through Tell el-Dab'a, and copper objects were mostly produced according to local traditions. Lastly, bone and shell, especially as far as beads are concerned, suggest that Middle and Upper Egypt followed different traditions. During the Early Second Intermediate Period, the variety of lithic materials decreased, and these materials appear to circulate mostly between Lower and Middle Egypt. The Memphis-Fayyum area was still included in the distribution of the precious stones and of the stones entering Egypt through Tell el-Dab'a. When the materials could be found in both the central and southern parts of the Egyptian Eastern Desert, the sources in the central part appear to have been the ones more used, while the resources from the southern part were acquired only when available in proximity of the Wadi Hammamat and the Wadi Barramiya. Materials from the southernmost parts of the Egyptian Eastern Desert were transported to Lower Egypt, through routes passing both through the oases in the Western Desert and through the sites in Middle Egypt. The communities of Pan-grave culture probably played a role in the communications between different areas of Egypt, as suggested by the importance that the sites occupied by these group acquired, and by the materials found at these sites. Silver, together with bone and shell objects, seem to be indicator of these communities of Pan-grave culture and of the significance that they had at the time. Stones coming from further south Egypt have not been found in contexts of this time: this could derive from the fact that there were no sites with the resources required to do so at the time. The distribution of the types, combined with the distribution of materials, suggests that the lithic materials were worked locally or, in the case of materials that could be found also in the central part of the Egyptian Eastern Desert, at Tell el-Dab'a. At the same time, metal objects show a mostly localized production. During the Late Second Intermediate Period, lithic materials still seem to circulate more commonly between Lower and Middle Egypt, though contacts happened between Lower and the southern part of Upper Egypt. The Memphis-Fayyum area was relevant especially as access point to the desert routes through the Western Desert, which were used at the time for communications between Lower and Upper Egypt. The materials from the southern Egyptian Eastern Desert seem to have been shipped as raw material and be worked locally, even though they

circulated more than in the previous period and were acquired from deeper into the desert. The stones from the Sinai and the stones imported from the Levant were present only at Tell el-Dab'a. As suggested by its distribution, rock crystal could come from its sources in the Western Desert, and not in Sinai, at the time. Stones that could be imported into Egypt from further south still reached the Memphis-Fayyum area. Among metals, gold show connections between Lower and Upper Egypt, while copper and silver show a more marked regionalization. Through the objects of copper, Lower Egypt, Middle Egypt, and the Theban area are identified as three separate groups, while objects of silver appear to be connected to sites where Pan-grave culture are attested, in the same way as bone beads were.

Finally, Chapter 14 presents the conclusions of the present research. During the Late Middle Kingdom, the activity of a centralized administration located in the capital area in the Memphis-Fayyum area is still visible. This administration controlled the circulation of materials and was also a key production and distribution centre for the main types of objects, especially as far as objects of precious materials are concerned. These objects were transported both through the Nile Valley and through the Western Desert. The material culture was generally uniform, even though differences are visible in groups of objects that suggest the presence of or contacts with foreign communities. During the Early Second Intermediate Period, Tell el-Dab'a became important because it had reached independence under the Fourteenth Dynasty and, as a consequence, became able to acquire material resources and to produce and distribute the more common types of objects. Trade and exchanges continued between Lower Egypt and the Memphis-Fayyum area, as well as with Upper Egypt, mostly through the desert route. Communities of the Pan-grave culture became more important and played a role concerning the trade routes and the routes leading to the material resources. During the Late Second Intermediate Period, Tell el-Dab'a, under Hyksos rule, was an important site and had influence on the other sites in the Eastern Delta, as well as on the flow of goods between Egypt and the Levant. The use of the desert routes is shown by the sites in the Memphis-Fayyum area, which had close contacts with the Hyksos. Nevertheless, sites in Middle Egypt such as Qau el-Kebir and Mostagedda, which had strong connections with both Lower and the southern part of Upper Egypt, show not only that people travelled through the Nile Valley, but also that communities of the Pan-Grave culture were still significant in the communication and trade system. The communities buried at Matmar and Rifeh were also part of the routes between Lower and Upper Egypt, but were respectively under influence of the Hyksos and of other communities of Pan-grave culture such as the ones represented at Qau el-Kebir and Mostagedda. In Upper Egypt, the Theban area, which was probably the

centre of the kingdoms of the Sixteenth and of the Seventeenth Dynasty, was a major site, while the communities represented at Hu and Abydos bridged Lower and Upper Egypt and channelled the resources from the Eastern Desert. The community buried at Hu had close contacts with main communities of Pan-grave culture such as the ones represented at Qau el-Kebir and Mostagedda. It also had contacts with the Theban rulers and demonstrates the importance of the desert routes, to which it was a point of access. Abydos had connections with the Hyksos, probably because it was at the frontier of the Theban kingdom and was, therefore, a meeting and melting point for people and goods from both the Hyksos and the Theban Kingdom. Nevertheless, the results could also indicate that it was ruled by the Hyksos at the beginning of the Late Second Intermediate Period. Lastly, Elephantine could also be a separate territory, and even in closer contacts with Nubia than with the rest of Egypt, but the data are too few to take this hypothesis further.