

Review of: Anna-Latifa Mourad, Rise of the Hyksos. Egypt and the Levant from the Middle Kingdom to the Early Second Intermediate Period. Archaeopress Egyptology 11, 2015. Oxford: Archaeopress. xiv+314 pages, £ 48.00. ISBN 9781784911331.

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The volume to be discussed is a first attempt to deal with the problem of „Asiatic“ presence in Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period Egypt, the division of the state and the emergence of the Hyksos kingdom in the Eastern Delta, by comprehensively studying both material culture and textual sources from Egypt and the Levant. Recently another study on „Asiatics“ in Middle Kingdom Egypt appeared concentrating mostly on artistic representations and textual attestations of Asiatics without a detailed study of the other forms of archaeological record (SARETTA, 2016).

This book is based on a doctoral dissertation submitted in 2014 at Australia’s Macquarie University and is divided in three main sections (Studying the Hyksos with 3 chapters; Evidence for Contact with 3 chapters; Observations and findings with 2 chapters). It also offers Appendix A with collected ambiguous data from the Levant (uncertain contexts or dating) and Appendix B with translations of the written sources referred to in the work. The book contains 139 figures in line drawing and 4 colored plates with photos.

In the introduction the author rightly emphasizes that in studying the formation of the Hyksos state other authors mostly concentrated selectively on only one class of sources e.g. scarabs or textual sources. That these studies were mostly regional poses an additional problem (pp. 3). Primary goal of the author is to investigate the formation of the independent state in the eastern Delta of Egypt, furthermore to shed light on the origins of the 15th dynasty and reanalyze Egyptian-Levantine relations (pp. 4). As her main method the author states tracing elements of West Asiatic ethnic groups and culture in Egypt and Eastern desert using archaeological, textual and artistic evidence. This is at the same time the first insufficiently discussed aspect of this study. None of the goals acknowledge the local agency in the process of central state disintegration and emergence of the independent Hyksos kingdom (cf. BADER, 2011, 44, for the role of the locals). This study thus represents a well-known case of archaeological research on objects of foreign origin in contexts other than the original. Quite often

such studies easily mistake presence of foreign objects for presence of foreigners, usually framed within textual evidence mentioning the presence of foreigners, or within their representations by the locals (for critical view see e.g. Lucy, 2005). This archaeological method is rooted in culture-historical archaeology which relies on the premise that certain archaeological remains such as pottery, ornaments, house forms and burial customs represent the rests of what at the beginning of the 20th century was defined as „a people“ (CHILDE, 1929, v–vi). Within the research parameters the author states that she follows low Middle Bronze Age chronology of Manfred Bietak (pp. 6). This is a second major flaw of the study as following low chronology clearly has consequences for interpretation of certain contexts and can be considered erroneous (see the Chayan problem below). This is primarily because Bietak’s low chronology synchronizations are based on questionable datum lines which are again based on unfounded interpretations of certain archaeological contexts, e.g. the interpretation of burials in ‘Ezbet Helmi I, III, VI-North, as burials of „Nubian soldiers“ employed by Ahmose in conquering Avaris (for criticism see HÖFLMAYER, 2015, 285; MATIĆ, 2014), attribution of certain strata of Tell el-Dab’a to the reigns of specific Hyksos kings (for criticism see FORSTNER-MÜLLER & ROSE, 2012) and the use of generational model (cf. HÖFLMAYER, 2015). Quite recently new ¹⁴C data have appeared providing additional support for high Middle Bronze Age chronology and consistency with ¹⁴C dates from Tell el-Dab’a, Tel Ifshar and Tell el-Burak (HÖFLMAYER ET AL., 2016).

After defining research problems, goals, methodology and parameters of the study the author continues with history of research in chapter 2 „Previous Scholarship“. In this rather short history of research the author lists the ancient authors and modern scholars who dealt with the origins of the Hyksos, however she does not discuss the methods of their work and most importantly research paradigms which formed the basis of their research.

The study continues with chapter 3 „Ethnicity and its representations“, which basically shortly summarizes archaeological research on ethnicity referring primarily to the work of Siân Jones (1997). Meanwhile studies dealing with the theoretical and methodological problems behind ethnic identification of material culture in Tell el-Dab’a appeared which pointed out the methodological fallacies of the culture-historical approach in archaeology (MATIĆ, 2014; 2015a). The author also introduces recent discussions on cultural

mixing which were in archaeology of Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period Egypt initiated by Bettina Bader (2013). The author does not mention that terms such as hybridity and creolisation are based on archaeological applications of postcolonial theory. Introduction of discussion on ethnicity and the work of Jones is indeed not coming through throughout the study and can be seen as already criticized „obligation to theory“ with little epistemological consequences (cf. MÜLLER, 2010, 217).

The study continues with a comprehensive and well organized catalogue of sites with what the author defines as Levantine traces (archaeological, artistic or textual) in chapter 4 „Tracing Asiatics in Egypt“, which is divided regionally into Delta, Memphite Region, Middle Egypt, Upper Egypt and unprovenanced. The culture-historical background of the study is evident in the author's statement that low number of foreign artefacts reflects trade or exchange rather than ethnic presence. On this basis she does not include the sites which have low number of foreign artefacts in her catalogue. Quite surprising is the lack of an entry on Gebelein in Upper Egypt, where the blocks with the names of Apophis and Khayan were found and interpreted either as, less likely, evidence for the Hyksos fort, or most likely, possible spoil of war (POLZ, 2006). The most detailed catalogue entries are those on different areas of Tell el-Dab'a which is clearly the consequence of the state of research. Some erroneous information have to be corrected here. The author refers to the presence of three harbors in Tell el-Dab'a (pp. 22), although recent work on this feature of the city showed existence of only one major harbor and several docks and mooring places. It is clear that there was no harbor in area F/II and that the main harbor of Avaris was located in area A/VI close to the settlement/administrative area R/III and the settlement area with burials in R/IV (FORSTNER-MÜLLER, 2014). Although, results of the current research of the Austrian mission in Tell el-Dab'a regarding the harbor of Avaris were only recently published in a comprehensive report (FORSTNER-MÜLLER, HASSLER, MATIĆ & ROSE, 2015), information on the new results can be found in some other published works (HERBICH & FORSTNER-MÜLLER, 2013; FORSTNER-MÜLLER, 2014). The entry on area R/III is rather short bearing in mind that this is one of the best documented settlement areas in Tell el-Dab'a (pp. 24). A problematic view on ethnicity is expressed in the author's claims that petrographic sections of cooking pots may shed light on the ethnic identity of people living in Tell el-Dab'a

or their culinary preferences (pp. 41). Here the author does not state clearly enough that culinary preferences and use of certain cooking utilities are not the same thing. Preferences for certain cooking utilities of cooking products are not necessarily signifier of ethnicity. One welcoming criticism (pp. 42) the author directs at craniometric results used in racial diagnosis of buried individuals in Tell el-Dab'a usually in combination with culture-historical approach to material culture. This issue was already discussed elsewhere in detail (BADER, 2012, 219; MATIĆ, 2014). However, this criticism is strangely contradicted by her use of the term „race“ without critical reference to it or any distantiation (pp. 68). An additional problem is the author's approach to iconographic material, especially in regards to identification of pottery forms in Egyptian visual representations. Thus, she interprets a vessel in the tomb of Amenemhat (Nr. 2), dated to the reign of Senusret I of early 12th dynasty, in Beni Hasan as dipper juglet suggesting knowledge of this form by Egyptians (pp. 85) and being that the vessel is depicted in the context of a pottery workshop also local production. In Tell el-Dab'a at least, dipper juglets are for the first time attested in Stratum H (late 12th dynasty) but as imports, with the local manufacture in I-d clay starting with Stratum F (mid 13th dynasty) (KOPETZKY, 2008, 207–211). The problem with author's identification of the vessel is that the one in the tomb of Amenemhat has a flat bottom and damaged rim. In referring to king xyAn (Khayan) sealings from Tell Edfu found together with those of Sobekhotep IV in the context with pottery of the early 15th dynasty, she fails to consider the consequence this date has for the low Middle Bronze Age chronology she adopts (pp. 107). The author dates the Tod treasure into the reign of Amenemhat II (pp. 114). The chests of this treasure were found beneath the stone foundations of the temple of Montu in Tod and two of them are indeed incised with the names of Amenemhat II. The stratigraphy does not eliminate later deposition which as the author indeed writes caused later dating by some authors. Her dating is based on the incised names of Amenemhat II and stylistic date of the seals from the treasure to his reign (pp. 115). She does not discuss the dating of other objects and fails to refer to the crucial work of Joseph Maran who showed that the metal vessels in the treasure have clear parallels in vessels from Shaft Graves period in Greece, especially in a gold kantharos from this period found in 1976 in Peristeria (MARAN, 1987). This later dating of the treasure fits well with our knowledge on early diplomatic

contacts and gift-exchange between Egypt under Hatshepsut and Thutmose III and Aegean Bronze Age world (cf. most recently MATIĆ, 2015b). Therefore, the connection the author makes between this treasure and the Mit Rahina text mentioning connections with northern Levant (pp. 125) is based on erroneous dating of the Tod hoard deposition. In concluding discussion on chapter 4 the author summarizes chronologically the evidence for contact between Egypt and Levant. Among else she argues that the presence of „locally-made cooking pots” in Tell el-Dab’a indicates Asiatic residence (pp. 125). This is clearly an epistemological problem because if the pots were locally made we cannot know if a person of Egyptian or foreign origin produced them. Conclusions regarding 13th dynasty Tell el-Dab’a that the population in area F/I had heterogeneous ancestry and elite representing itself though both Egyptian and Asiatic features (pp. 127) are indeed already present in scholarship (e.g. SCHIESTL, 2009). The statement that when the general population in Tell el-Dab’a suffered from higher mortality rate the elite answered with constructing of the largest documented Middle Bronze Age temple with reorganised settlement plots (pp. 129) is indeed interesting, but this connection is not based on any comprehensive bioarchaeological paleodemographic study which still has to be done. Finally she refers to the population of 15th dynasty Tell el-Dab’a as „creole” (pp. 130), a term originating in postcolonial studies, although basic premises of postcolonial theory on identity are entirely absent from this work. This rather suggests the use of an attractive buzz word and not integrated postcolonial theoretical thinking.

Chapter 5 „Between Egypt and the Levant”: The Eastern Desert provides a catalogue of sites with Levantine material or sites with visual representations or textual attestations of foreign population from the Levant.

Chapter 6 „Contact with the Egyptian in the Levant” provides a catalogue of sites in the Levant with Egyptian imported material or Egyptian connections through iconography, divided into two groups, sites in southern and northern Levant. Here a major methodological fallacy can be traced. Namely, the author states that „determining Hyksos relations is marred by the very fact that their culture is largely Levantine” (pp. 147). The consideration of what does the author understand under the term Hyksos aside, this statement implies that there is no difference in material culture between the eastern Delta and the Levant which is simply not true (e.g. BADER, 2013). One interesting

observation of the author is that sites with imported commodities concentrate along the coast indicating maritime-based trade (pp. 183).

Chapter 7 „Representing Asiatics and the Levant” discusses the development on Egyptian representations of the *other* targeting northerners. The author divides the sources into inscriptions and texts from royal and administrative complexes, royal funerary complexes, temples and religious texts, non-royal settlements and occupation levels, non-royal-graffiti, non-royal cemeteries and tombs of official and literary pieces. It can be noticed that these representations tend to be like *topos* in royal context and more *mimesis* in private context and non-royal settlements (pp. 189–193). The author also lists the known toponyms organised geographically into eastern desert, southern Levant and northern Levant. She also includes personal names and titles which illustrate the variety of roles people of northern origins could have taken in Egypt being employed in state administration, palatial complexes, temple precincts, military and security offices, local government, specialised crafts, labour work, household ranks etc. (pp. 200–201). At the end of the chapter the author discusses artistic representations.

Chapter 8 „Rulers of Foreign Lands” summarizes the results of the study in relation to the author’s research questions. The author argues that there is no evidence for sudden or radical change in the material culture and an invasion (pp. 215). This is already a well-known fact. Further she states that the 13th dynasty brought freedom of expressing ethnicity and status which may be associated with an emerging dynasty’s legitimization of power (pp. 216), however she does not demonstrate where we see that. The archaeological record of Tell el-Dab’a does not show any major changes. She discusses two terms (aAm and HqA xAs.wt) related to the Hyksos as possible indicators of their identity, but fails to consider that although used by the eastern Delta rulers too, these terms could have meant something different for them. The author rightfully states that any attempt to pinpoint one ethnic origin of the 15th dynasty populace is ineffective (pp. 216), but this is again not a new thought. Although she considers that 15th dynasty elite and ruling class expresses more affinities to Northern Levantine customs and close political and commercial ties with northern Levant (pp. 217) she fails to consider why is this so. Elite identity expressions with northern Levantine elements (palaces, titles, cuneiform correspondence) could be related to the fact that the 15th dynasty constructed its own kingship incorporating northern forms of kingship expres-

sion into Egyptian ideas of kingship because the power center in the eastern Mediterranean shifted to the north and because Egypt being left without part of its land in the north and without control of Nubia. However, the author considers feasible that the early Hyksos were of elite ancestry from RTnw (pp. 217) without clear arguments why. In the final passage she suggests that the 15th dynasty originates in the incomers who came to Egypt (Tell el-Dab'a), formed commercial ties, and seized the opportunity of internal conflicts to separate the city from its rulers and establish an independent kingdom (pp. 218). Indeed, it is not clear how does this conclusion relate to the studied data and it seems to be a consequence of a dichotomy Egyptian-foreign (Asiatic/Levantine) adopted by the author. This dichotomy was already considered inappropriate from many reasons (e.g. POLZ, 1998, 221–222; SCHIESTL, 2009, 200; ROBERTS, 2013, 289).

Finally, the study at hand, with all its shortcomings, presents a pioneer attempt to study the rich and overwhelming data on contacts between Egypt and the Levant and the Levantine presence in Egypt during the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period entirely. Indeed, some sites, finds and references are not included in the work, but this must not be seen as a major shortcoming. The author is to be congratulated on collecting and systematically presenting almost all the sites with related material in a catalogue divided regionally as this must have been time consuming process. Until now there is no monographs attempting to cover all the sites in Egypt with the Levantine or Levant related material culture, artistic representations and textual attestations on one side, and sites in the Levant with Egyptian material culture on the other. In this regard the book before us can serve as a stepping stone for more theoretically nuanced study on the formation of the Hyksos state.

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