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THE 'CITY' ACROSS TIME

**Emergence, developments, and social, economic
political, cultural and health impact**

(Rome, 8-10 June 2022)

a cura di / edited by Marcella FRANGIPANE



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INDICE

COMITATO ORDINATORE	Pag.	6
SALUTI ISTITUZIONALI		
R. ANTONELLI.....	»	7
A. POLIMENI.....	»	9
G. PIRAS	»	11
M. FRANGIPANE, Ragioni e obiettivi del Convegno.....	»	13
1. THE BIRTH OF CITIES. DIFFERENT TRAJECTORIES AND OUTCOMES IN URBANIZATION PROCESSES		
M. FRANGIPANE, Urbanization in the Near East. Different processes and types of ‘cities’ in formative time.....	»	19
G. ALGAZE, The transregional origins of Early Mesopotamian civilization.....	»	43
A. CARDARELLI, On the threshold of history. The origin of the first cities in Italy	»	77
M. PEARCE, Different models of urbanization. Early towns in temperate Europe and the ‘Proto-Urban’ centres of early 1 st millennium South Etruria	»	95
J. MÜLLER, Trypillia Mega-Sites: Planned cityscape?.....	»	117
L.R. MANZANILLA, Teotihuacan in Central Mexico: An exceptional megalopolis.....	»	141
2. DIFFERENT MODELS OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ‘CITIES’		
A. MCMAHON, Tell Brak and Northern Mesopotamian Cities .	»	161
L. NIGRO, The diverse urbanism of the Levant: Models and achievements. The case of tell Es-Sulton / Ancient Jericho in the Early Bronze Age II	»	179

M. BIETAK, Harbour towns of the Bronze Age: The examples of Avaris and Byblos	Pag.	207
A. SHACHNER, Preliminary reflections on Central Anatolian urbanism during the 2 nd Millennium BC	»	253
 3. CITIES IN THE ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN WORLD		
L. GODART, From the emergence of towns to the birth of Palaces in the Aegean Bronze Age.....	»	283
M. D'ACUNTO, The birth of the <i>polis</i> and the city-states of Archaic Greece: the archaeological perspective (750-480 BC)..	»	303
P. CARAFA, When? Where? How? Questions on the origins of the city in Rome	»	321
L. CAPOGROSSI COLOGNESI, The city and its institutional heritage.....	»	347
S. GELICHI, The city from the Antiquity to the Middle Ages in Italy: A historical-archaeological perspective	»	363
 4. ANCIENT NON-EUROPEAN CITIES: URBAN TYPES FROM NORTH AFRICA AND THE INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT		
L. MORI, Urbanization in the Central Sahara in the 1 st millennium BCE.....	»	379
 5. CITIES IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD		
M.L. SMITH, R. KUMAR MOHANTY, Political power, urban administration, and emotional labor in the cities of the Ancient Indian Subcontinent: A textual and archaeological perspective.....	»	399
B. BONOMO, Housing the masses: European and Italian cities in the post-war era	»	421
G.M. LABRIOLA, La dimensione politica e pubblica della città contemporanea. Uno sguardo da fuori	»	441
A. ACCETTURO, P. SESTITO, Urban agglomerations in the Italian economy	»	457
M. COLUCCI, Cities and population mobility in the contemporary age: Rome and Lazio between emigration and immigration	»	477

P. PELLEGRINI, The invention of Chinese cities after the opening up. Between modernization and sustainability Pag. 491

6. RISKS IN URBAN LIFE

S. DE MARTINO, The epidemic of the Late 14th Century BC and its effects on the Hittite Kingdom and its capital » 513

F. D'ANDRIA, Disaster risk in urban environments (Roman Era). The case of Hierapolis in Phrygia » 527

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HARBOUR TOWNS OF THE BRONZE AGE: THE EXAMPLES OF AVARIS AND BYBLOS⁽¹⁾

ABSTRACT – This article deals with the comparison and cyclical relationship of the two most important harbour towns in Egypt and the eastern Levant during the Early, Middle, and Late Bronze Ages: Avaris and Byblos. The structures of the two towns are given special attention, as are their Near-Eastern cultic practises, where a spiritual link can be observed in addition to their commercial and cultural relationships. A particularly interesting recent result is the possibility that the 14th Dynasty (c. 1710–1640 BCE) descended from the royal line of Byblos. The ties between the two towns seem to have been largely interrupted during the Hyksos Period (c. 1640–1530 BCE). Following King Ahmose’s (founder of the 18th Dynasty) conquest of the Hyksos capital Avaris, the town continued to be used by the victorious Egyptian kings as a military base and, later, as a strategic port known as Peru-nefer “happy sortie”. Under the Tuthmosid kings, it was Egypt’s main seaport. A large palatial compound (5.5 ha) was built at this time. Two of the palaces were embellished with Minoan wall paintings, indicating that Egypt and the Minoan Thalassocracy collaborated in maritime affairs. Byblos once again rose to prominence under Tuthmosid hegemony due to its maritime and logistical importance for Egyptian military campaigns. However, in the Amarna Period, the town fell victim to the ambitions of the princes of Amurru due to King Akhenaten’s neglect of foreign affairs. During the 19th Dynasty, Byblos was again Egypt’s primary supplier of coniferous wood, pitch, incense, and oils. At the time, Avaris became the southern part of Piramesse, the Delta residence of the Ramessides, and remained the Egyptian Navy’s principal port. As a protector of sailors, the Syrian storm god had a large temple precinct in the former Avaris/Peru-nefer. He appeared to be a Syrian divinity but was addressed as the Egyptian storm god Seth. As such, he was the “Father of the Fathers” of the Ramesside kings.

RIASSUNTO – Questo articolo tratta del confronto e della relazione ciclica delle due più importanti città portuali dell’Egitto e del Levante durante l’Antica, la Media e Tarda età del Bronzo: Avaris e Byblos. Le strutture delle due città sono oggetto di particolare attenzione, così come le loro pratiche culturali vicino-orientali, dove si può osservare un

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⁽¹⁾ The author would like to thank Marcella Frangipane, the spiritus rector of this conference for the invitation and Mouna Mounayar for editing the English.

legame spirituale oltre alle loro relazioni commerciali e culturali. Un risultato recente particolarmente interessante è la possibilità che la XIV dinastia (1710-1640 a.C. circa) discenda dalla linea reale di Byblos. I legami tra le due città sembrano essersi in gran parte interrotti durante il periodo Hyksos (1640-1530 a.C. circa). Dopo la conquista della capitale degli Hyksos, Avaris, da parte del re Ahmose (fondatore della XVIII dinastia), la città continuò a essere utilizzata dai re egiziani vincitori come base militare e, in seguito, come porto strategico noto come Peru-nefer "felice sortita". Sotto i re Tuthmosid, era il principale porto marittimo dell'Egitto. In questo periodo fu costruito un grande complesso di palazzi (5,5 ettari). Due dei palazzi erano abbelliti da pitture minoiche, il che indica che l'Egitto e la talassocrazia minoica collaboravano negli affari marittimi. Byblos salì nuovamente alla ribalta sotto l'egemonia Tuthmoside grazie alla sua importanza marittima e logistica per le campagne militari egiziane. Tuttavia, nel periodo di Amarna, la città cadde vittima delle ambizioni dei principi di Amurru a causa del disinteresse del re Akhenaton per gli affari esteri. Durante la XIX dinastia, Byblos tornò a essere il principale fornitore di legno di conifere, pece, incenso e oli dell'Egitto. In quel periodo, Avaris divenne la parte meridionale di Piramesse, la residenza del Delta dei Ramessidi, e rimase il principale porto della Marina egiziana. Come protettore dei marinai, il dio siriano della tempesta aveva un grande tempio nell'ex Avaris/Peru-nefer. Sembrava essere una divinità siriana, ma veniva chiamato Seth, il dio egizio della tempesta. In quanto tale, era il "Padre dei Padri" dei re ramessidi.

I. TELL EL-DAB' A/AVARIS-PIRAMESSE

Tell el-Dab'a has a long history of exploration, but the important excavations were carried out between 1966 and 2015 under the auspices of the University of Vienna and the Austrian Archaeological Institute, and a branch office was established in Cairo in 1973⁽²⁾ (fig. 1). The site is situated on top of turtlebacks east of the former Pelusiac (easternmost) branch of the Nile (fig. 2)⁽³⁾. The short distance to the Mediterranean (30-40 km) was important because river navigation was nearly impossible during the dry season in spring (March-June) due to low water levels⁽⁴⁾, however, near the sea, the empty Nile channels were filled with sea water, providing year-round access to the Mediterranean. From the 12th dynasty onward, it was a harbour town,

⁽²⁾ Literature about the site: HABACHI 1954; HABACHI 2001; VAN SETERS 1966; BIETAK 1975; BIETAK 1981/1986; BIETAK 1996; BIETAK 1997; BIETAK 2010a; BIETAK 2022a. Twenty five volumes on Tell el-Dab'a and numerous articles have been published on these investigations, most of them in the Journal *Egypt and the Levant*. Regarding the harbours of Avaris and Piramesse see fn. 4 and BIETAK 2017; BIETAK 2022b; BIETAK 2023.

⁽³⁾ BIETAK 1975; BIETAK 1981/1986; DORNER 1999.

⁽⁴⁾ LE PÈRE 1822, pp. 240-241; CLOT 1840; BIETAK 2010d, pp. 168-169; COOPER 2012; 2014.



Fig. 1. Position of Avaris and Byblos and other harbour towns in the eastern Mediterranean.

with an enormous harbour basin (c. 450 x 400 m) in the heart of the town⁽⁵⁾. It is unclear at present if this size was achieved all at once or if the basin was enlarged over time. It is more probable that the basin was enlarged to the south while silting up to the north.

The town was founded as a planned settlement⁽⁶⁾, most likely by King Amenemhat I (c. 1996–1967 BCE)⁽⁷⁾, in an effort to colonise the eastern Delta against Asiatic immigration during the First Intermediate Period and its aftermath. This settlement was abandoned, and a new planned settlement was established some hundred metres to the north-east, near the present

⁽⁵⁾ DORNER 1999; TRONCHÈRE et al. 2008, pp. 339-352; TRONCHÈRE 2010; TRONCHÈRE et al. 2012.

⁽⁶⁾ CZERNY 1999; BIETAK 1996, pp. 8-10, fig. 5.

⁽⁷⁾ Chronological data after SCHNEIDER 2008.



Fig. 3. A Syrian Middle Room-House and a Bent Axis House in Phase H of the late 12th Dynasty (after BIETAK 1984a, fig. 3).

In the late 12th Dynasty, during the reign of Amenemhat III (c. 1874–1828 BCE), Western Asiatic immigrants settled all around the rectangular Egyptian settlement. That they came from the northern Levant can be shown by their house types, such as the Syrian Middle-Room House or the Broad-Room- and Bent-Axis House (fig. 3)⁽¹¹⁾. Their material culture points to the region that is now Lebanon⁽¹²⁾; the architecture, however, was inspired by northernmost Syria. The new settlers also introduced the Near Eastern weighing system rather than adopting Egyptian weights, which in the modern world represents a change in the monetary system and demonstrates which economic network was more significant to this town⁽¹³⁾. These newcomers appear to have got along well with the Egyptians. Throughout the Second Intermediate Period, the Egyptians remained in their old town at ‘Ezbet Rushdy⁽¹⁴⁾. They could even expand their town to the south at the expense of the foreigners. The absence of intramural burials and lost toggle pins in the Egyptian quarter

⁽¹¹⁾ EIGNER 1986, p. 19, fig. 1; BIETAK 1984a, pp. 324–325, fig. 3; 2010a, 17, fig. 12.

⁽¹²⁾ KOPETZKY 2019/2020, p. 55; COHEN-WEINBERGER, GOREN 2004, tab. 2.

⁽¹³⁾ PRELL, RAHMSDORF 2019; PRELL, RAHMSDORF 2021; PRELL, RAHMSDORF, IALONGO 2021.

⁽¹⁴⁾ BIETAK 2016a; BIETAK 2018a.

could prove this situation. Intramural burials and lost pins were found outside the ancient town of ‘Ezbet Rushdy, just beyond the separating street⁽¹⁵⁾.

These foreigners, who can be referred to as Canaanites for convenience, could only have migrated to Egypt with the consent of the Egyptian crown and, based on the evidence of weaponry in tombs, seemed to have been employed as soldiers and expedition specialists⁽¹⁶⁾. The harbour and other close connections to Byblos support the theory that the site became a hub for maritime expeditions during the 12th and 13th Dynasties, both of which had ties to Byblos⁽¹⁷⁾. This situation appears to have triggered an influx of Western Asiatics to the town, which swelled to 100 ha in three generations, the size of Syria’s largest towns.

A dignitary with the title “Prince of Retjenu” had a prominent role in this community. Retjenu was a region that spanned nearly the whole Levant and could not have been controlled by a single prince⁽¹⁸⁾. Therefore, it seems more likely that this was an honorary title bestowed by Egyptian authorities on the leader of the Asiatic community in Avaris, as the town was called, at least from the 13th Dynasty onward⁽¹⁹⁾. During the reign of Amenemhat III, Egyptian expeditions to the pharaonic turquoise mines at Serabit al-Khadem were often accompanied by a “Brother of the Prince of Retjenu”⁽²⁰⁾, Asiatic miners have left us inscribed references to “Ba‘alat”, the Canaanite version of the Egyptian goddess Hathor, “mistress of turquoise”⁽²¹⁾. On one of the stelae depicting the “Brother of the Prince of Retjenu”, he is shown in the dress code of Egyptian officials⁽²²⁾, indicating that the Egyptian authorities established the offices of the “Brother of the Prince of Retjenu” and “the Prince of Retjenu” (see below).

The head and nearby fragments of the same limestone statue of an Asiatic dignitary with yellow skin colour, a red mushroom-shaped coiffure, and the multicoloured plissé robe of a Syrian dignitary (fig. 4a) were discovered in the chapel of the largest tomb of the earliest settlement layer of Western Asiatic immigrants⁽²³⁾. The statue was fashioned by high-quality

(15) BIETAK 2016a, figs. 5-7; BIETAK 2018a, figs. 3-5.

(16) SCHIESTL 2009, pp. 101-119.

(17) ALBRIGHT 1964; ALBRIGHT 1965; MONTET 1964; KITCHEN 1967; MARTIN 1996; ALLEN 2008, pp. 33-38; FLAMMINI 2010; KOPETZKY 2016.

(18) KOPETZKY, BIETAK 2016; BIETAK 2022a, p. 259, fig. 149.

(19) *Ibidem*.

(20) GOLDWASSER 2012/2013.

(21) GOLDWASSER 2016.

(22) GARDINER, PEET, ČERNÝ 1952, pl. 24; GOLDWASSER 2012/2013, p. 357, fig. 10

(23) BIETAK 1991b, pp. 60, 62-64, figs. 8, 10, pls. 16-17; BIETAK 1996, 18, pp. 20-21, figs. 16, 17, pl. 4; see especially SCHIESTL 2006; SCHIESTL 2009, pp. 77-89, figs. 44-47, pls. IV, XIVb-c; D. ARNOLD 2010, pp. 191-194, fig. 1a, pls. 28-29.



Fig. 4a. Over life-size limestone statue of a Canaanite dignitary, discovered in fragments in the ruins of the superstructure of his tomb in Phase H in Area F/I at Tell el-Dab'a, dated to the late 12th Dynasty (after SCHIESTL 2006, figs. 44-45).



© Staatliches Museum Ägyptischer Kunst, München.
Foto: Marianne Franke

Fig. 4b. Head of a statue of another Canaanite dignitary most likely originating from the same site at Tell el-Dab'a as previous statue, but dating already to the 13th Dynasty (courtesy of the Staatliches Museum Ägyptischer Kunst, München, photograph Marianne Franke).

ity Egyptian artists, and we believe it was an honorary statue given to the prince as a royal gift. The statue dates to the late 12th Dynasty⁽²⁴⁾. The head of another such statue circulated in the antiquity market and is now housed at the Egyptian Museum in Munich (fig. 4b)⁽²⁵⁾. It dates slightly later, to the 13th Dynasty, and originates most likely from the cemetery of the mansion in Phase G/4 of the early 13th Dynasty at Tell el-Dab‘a⁽²⁶⁾.

Who exactly were these dignitaries? Because these statues represent princes in regalia, we propose it would make sense to identify them as the “Princes of Retjenu”. Both statues were mutilated and broken by heavy hammer blows, raising the question of when this occurred. After evaluating the pottery remains from the tomb chapels of the mansion in Phase G/4 of the early 13th Dynasty, Robert Schiestl concluded that the mortuary cult persisted throughout Phases G/1-3 (the 13th Dynasty). Did the iconoclasm occur at the beginning of the 14th Dynasty or at the beginning of the 15th Dynasty, when the 14th Dynasty palace was burned? This, for the time being, is difficult to answer. The end of Phase G/1-3 seems to have been connected with an epidemic event, as many burials can be considered emergency graves⁽²⁷⁾. The eastern part of the settlement was abandoned in favour of the below-mentioned temple precinct, which heralded the establishment of the 14th Dynasty. What speaks against a violent rupture between the 13th and the beginning of the 14th Dynasty is that the title “Prince of Retjenu” was found engraved on an amethyst scarab in the elite cemetery south of a palatial mansion⁽²⁸⁾ (Phase G/4) and on a seal impression in the 14th Dynasty palace⁽²⁹⁾. As we also find a mutilation of the figure of King Neḥesy of the 14th Dynasty on an obelisk in Tanis⁽³⁰⁾, it appears more likely that the destruction of the abovementioned statues may have occurred around the beginning of Hyksos rule, around 1640 BCE, as we also have other signs of violence in the last phase of the 14th Dynasty palace in the form of a conflagration⁽³¹⁾.

In the next generation, at the beginning of the 13th Dynasty (Phase G/4), the Near Eastern domestic type of buildings gave way to Egyptian architec-

⁽²⁴⁾ D. ARNOLD 2010, pp. 191-194.

⁽²⁵⁾ WILDUNG 2000, p. 186, no. 83; DO. ARNOLD, 2010, pp. 193-194, pl. 30; BIETAK 2022a, p. 261, fig. 20.

⁽²⁶⁾ See previous note.

⁽²⁷⁾ BIETAK 1984a, pp. 334-336, fig. 9; BIETAK 1997, pp. 105, 107, fig. 4.19.

⁽²⁸⁾ Museum Cairo JE 98524/JE98565; Lit: BIETAK 1991b, p. 67, fig. 15, pls. 22A-B; BIETAK 1996, pp. 26-27, figs. 22/1, 68, pl. 11D; HEIN, MLINAR 1994, p. 97; detailed discussion by MLINAR 2001, II, pp. 68-73; SCHIESTL 2009, pp. 90-92, 193-194, figs. 48/2; 335/3, pl. XV/c. – I would like to support the reconstruction of the lacuna at the beginning of the title as *[ḥqʿ n R]ṯnw* by G.T. MARTIN (1998, pp. 109-112); see BIETAK 2022, pp. 259-261, fig. 18.

⁽²⁹⁾ KOPETZKY, BIETAK 2016, pp. 359-361; fig. 3; BIETAK 2022a, pp. 258-259; fig. 16.

⁽³⁰⁾ PETRIE 1885, p. 8, pl. III/19A-D; BIETAK 2022a, pp. 236-238, fig. 2.

⁽³¹⁾ BIETAK et al. 2012/2013, pp. 32-36; BIETAK 2022a, pp. 256-258.

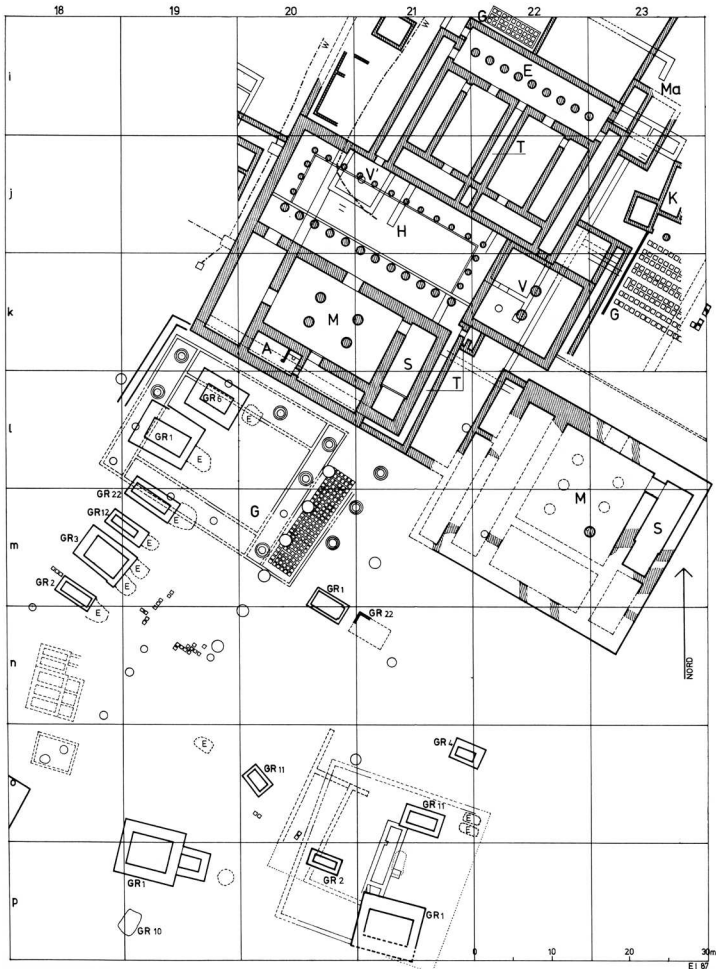


Fig. 5. Palatial mansion of the early 13th Dynasty (Phase G/4) at Tell el-Dab'a. It could have been the seat of the Asiatic dignitary with the title of a "Prince of Retjenu"; South of the mansion is an elite cemetery displaying Western Asiatic burial customs (after BIETAK 1996, fig. 18)

ture. An over-2000-sq-m palatial mansion was erected on the site of a large Middle-Room House (fig. 5)⁽³²⁾. The dignitaries of this mansion belonged to the Near Eastern cultural sphere, as evidenced by their burial inventories in the attached cemetery, such as Asiatic weapons and burial practises, in-

⁽³²⁾ BIETAK 1984a, pp. 325-326, fig. 3; EIGNER 1985, p.19, fig. 1; BIETAK 1996, pp. 10-12, fig. 8.

cluding the interment of pairs of donkeys and caprids in front of the tomb chamber entrance.

What follows in Phase G/1-3 – as far as can be judged from the area of the mansions – is a period of egalitarian settlement structure that ended, at least in one major excavation area, with the above-mentioned emergency graves within pits into which the corpses were interred quickly – often thrown into the pit without proper bedding or offerings. Despite the fact that an epidemic looks to have ravaged the town, violence cannot be completely ruled out. Houses were abandoned in a more eastern part of the town, making room for either cemeteries or a large sacred precinct.

The following phases (F-E/3-2) can be dated to the 14th Dynasty of kinglets of Western Asiatic origin⁽³³⁾ (c. 1710–1640 BCE). The settlement pattern in the town's centre reveals a social hierarchy through the differentiation of house sizes⁽³⁴⁾. The appearance of monumental temples and a palace, which were modelled after Near Eastern prototypes from northernmost Syria, is especially remarkable⁽³⁵⁾. Most likely constructed during the 14th Dynasty, the sacred precinct includes a Broad-Room Temple with a cult niche, a Bent-Axis temple, and an Egyptian-style temple, which indicates, by the magnitude of the architecture, a royal establishment (fig. 6). Two fragments of door frames in this precinct bearing the names of King ʿsḥ-Rʿ Neḥesy⁽³⁶⁾ hint that the precinct was commissioned during the reign of this king, who appears near the beginning of the 14th Dynasty in the Turin papyrus⁽³⁷⁾. King Neḥesy, who was of Near Eastern origin, seems to have introduced the cult of the Syrian storm god, in the guise of the Egyptian storm god Seth, to the eastern Delta and most probably also to Avaris. A local copy of a seal cylinder with the image of the Syrian storm god brandishing a duckbill axe and a club was found at Tell el-Dab'a⁽³⁸⁾.

The Broad-Room Temple (fig. 7) has its nearest contemporary models in the temple of the Syrian storm god in Aleppo⁽³⁹⁾ and the temple of Alalakh VII (fig. 7). The size and three elements (*cella*, *procella*, and side-room/tower) of the Bent-Axis Temple (fig. 8), have their closest parallels in the contemporary so-called “Priest Barracks” – possibly a predecessor of

⁽³³⁾ REDFORD 1992, pp. 106-107, and RYHOLT 1997, pp. 99-102, 126-130, identify royal names of the 14th Dynasty as Western Asiatic. See recently BIETAK 2022, pp. 258-264.

⁽³⁴⁾ BIETAK 2010a, pp. 46-47, fig. 19.

⁽³⁵⁾ BIETAK 2009; BIETAK 2016b; BIETAK 2019; BIETAK 2021.

⁽³⁶⁾ BIETAK 2022, p. 242, fig. 6.

⁽³⁷⁾ VON BECKERATH 1964, pp. 23-24, 82-83; VON BECKERATH 1984, p. 53; BIETAK 1984a, p. 61; RYHOLT 1997, pp. 94-96, fig. 11.

⁽³⁸⁾ PORADA 1984; BIETAK 1990; UEHLINGER 1990.

⁽³⁹⁾ KOHLMAYER 2000; GONELLA, KHAYYATA, KOHLMAYER 2005; KOHLMAYER 2009; KOHLMAYER 2012; KOHLMAYER 2013; KOHLMAYER 2016.

the great Temple of Ishtar at Ebla⁽⁴⁰⁾, Temple B2 of the “Royal Ancestors” at Ebla,⁽⁴¹⁾ the Akkadian temple at Tell Brak,⁽⁴²⁾ and the Temple of Ishtar at Assur⁽⁴³⁾ (fig. 8). The religion and religious architecture of northernmost Syria appear to have inspired the decision makers in Avaris.

The Broad-Room Temples appear, at least from the Middle Bronze Age onwards, to have served male divinities, whereas the Bent-Axis Temples, except for the Tigris region, were designed for goddesses⁽⁴⁴⁾. While, according to their typology, the main temples were dedicated to Near Eastern divinities, with parallels to the storm god and his female partner Ishtar or Asherah, there was also situated, parallel to the main Broad-Room Temple, an Egyptian temple-type featuring a typical tripartite sanctuary with a *procella* in front (fig. 6), indicating that a kind of syncretistic cult was practised in this precinct. Because this temple, like the main temple, was endowed with a burnt offering altar in its forecourt, the nearest reasonable guess is that this shrine was dedicated to Hathor, who was not only a necropolis goddess but also a goddess of remote regions such as Punt and Byblos, as well as mines and precious commodities from abroad⁽⁴⁵⁾. She is the closest match to Near Eastern female divinities. She was addressed as the Ba‘alat by the Canaanite miners of Serabit el-Khadem⁽⁴⁶⁾ and was known as Hathor, the mistress of Byblos, since the Old Kingdom⁽⁴⁷⁾.

The sacred precinct follows the orientation of the central harbour basin. It was surrounded by clan cemeteries, each with its own mortuary chapel (fig. 6). The 14th Dynasty palace was, however, located several hundred metres west of the sacred precinct. It had a Near Eastern palatial layout and ended in a conflagration⁽⁴⁸⁾.

Within the palace, aside from storage jars filled with precious Egyptian blue and ritual instruments, was found the abovementioned seal impression of a “Prince of Retjenu” bearing the name *Ipy-šmw*. The name is an element of a prince of Byblos: *ḥtj-‘ n Kpnj Ipy-šmw-Ibj* “The Governor of Byblos”, with the name “my father is Ipy-shemu”⁽⁴⁹⁾. In the late Middle

(40) MATTHIAE 1990; MATTHIAE 1993; MATTHIAE 2016, p. 79, fig. 10; MARCHETTI, NIGRO 1997; BIETAK 2021, pp. 127-131, figs. 10-11.

(41) MATTHIAE 2016, p. 72, fig. 10; MATTHIAE et al. 1995, pp. 174-175, 178.

(42) WERNER 1994, p. 123, pl. 42/1-43/1; OATES, OATES, McDONALD 2001, pp. 73-91, figs. 91-105.

(43) ANDRAE 1922, pp. 5-26, pl. 7; BÄR 2003, pp. 395-407, figs. 9-20.

(44) BIETAK 2018b; BIETAK 2019, 63, fig. 23; BIETAK 2021, pp. 133-134, fig. 16.

(45) STADELMANN 1967, pp. 1-13.

(46) GOLDWASSER 2006, pp. 151-153; GOLDWASSER 2022.

(47) STADELMANN 1967, pp. 1-13; SCANDONE-MATTHIAE 1991; HOLLIS 2009.

(48) BIETAK et al. 2012/2013, pp. 32-36; BIETAK 2022a, pp. 256-258.

(49) KOPETZKY, BIETAK 2016, pp. 359-372, fig. 3; BIETAK 2022a, pp. 258-259, fig. 16.



Fig. 6. The eastern temple precinct of Avaris in the time of the 14th Dynasty (after BIETAK 2019, fig. 3)

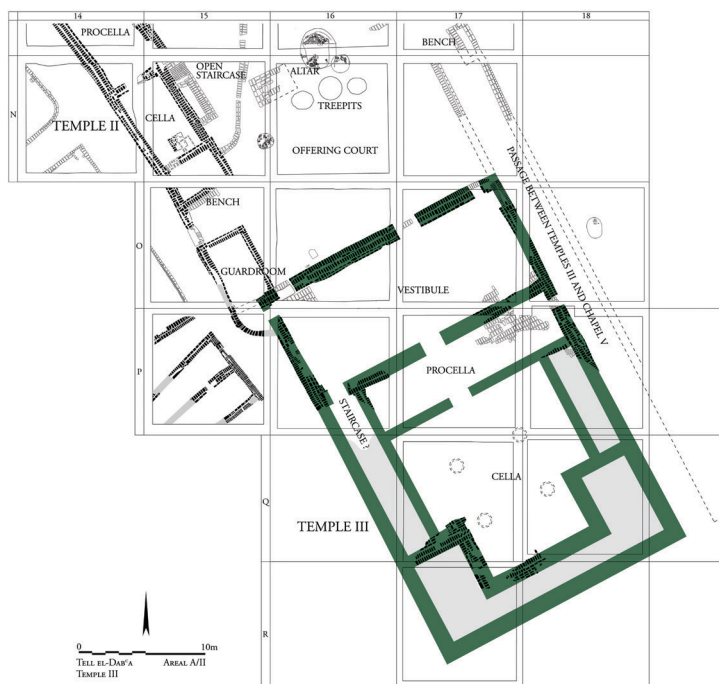


Fig. 7. The Broad-Room Temple III at Tell el-Dab'a and its nearest contemporary parallels (after BIETAK 2019, figs. 4, 8, 9)

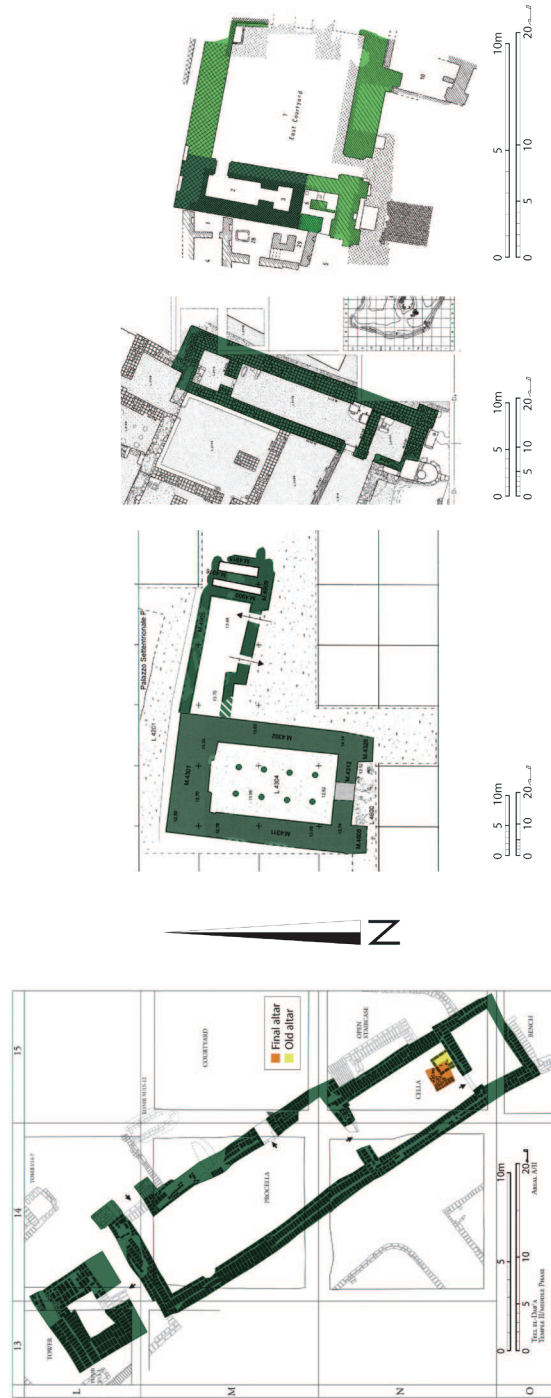


Fig. 8. The Bent Axis-Temple II at Tell el-Dab'a and its nearest contemporary and older parallels in Ebla, Tell Brak and Assur (after BIETAK 2022a, figs. 13-14)

Kingdom, the Princes of Byblos adopted the Egyptian title *ḥꜥtj-ꜥ*, which can be translated as “Governor”, “Mayor” or in older literature, “Count”. The mentioned seal belongs to the “Green Jasper Workshop”, which was localised by Dominique Collon at Byblos⁽⁵⁰⁾, but the bulla paste is made from local Delta clay⁽⁵¹⁾. This lends credence to the assumption that the “Prince of Retjenu” may have been from the family of the princes of Byblos. One may even muse whether the 14th Dynasty, which according to representations of King Neḥesy as a Levantine kinglet on an obelisk recovered at Tanis⁽⁵²⁾, could have descended from these “Princes of Retjenu”⁽⁵³⁾. Another seal from the “Green Jasper Workshop” of a prince of Byblos named *Nḥy*, found at Alalakh, lends support to this assumption⁽⁵⁴⁾. The name *Nḥy*, read by Mohamed Abd el-Maksoud and Dominique Valbelle as Neḥesy, also appears on a stela at Tell Hebwa, the ancient frontier fortress of Tjaru⁽⁵⁵⁾.

Because of trade with the eastern Mediterranean, the 14th Dynasty (Phases F, E/3) was a period of utmost prosperity. This is evident in luxury goods such as jewellery, stone vessels for ointments and maquillage, and the employment of metals, i.a., for weapons and mirrors⁽⁵⁶⁾.

With the beginning of the Hyksos Period (c. 1640 BCE), many changes can be observed in Avaris. The building material shifted from sandy brick to mudbrick. In the pottery corpus, there was a strong drop in imports and an increase in local production of Middle Bronze Age types, as well as hybridisation with a mix of Egyptian and Middle Bronze Age forms⁽⁵⁷⁾. In short, a kind of Egyptianisation can be noticed. Also, not far from the Hyksos palace, a large Egyptian-type temple was constructed⁽⁵⁸⁾. However, the offering pits in front of this new shrine reveal Near Eastern cultic performances⁽⁵⁹⁾.

On the other hand, the older 14th Dynasty temple precinct was gradually overrun with settlement buildings. The large Broad-Room Temple, however, remained intact throughout the Hyksos Period and cult waste, which had previously been spread in the courtyard in front of the temple, was now interred in favissae near the altar⁽⁶⁰⁾. Also, the analysis of the teeth of

⁽⁵⁰⁾ COLLON 1986; 2001.

⁽⁵¹⁾ Identified by Karin Kopetzky by microscopic analysis.

⁽⁵²⁾ BIETAK 2022a, n. 18, fig. 2.

⁽⁵³⁾ BIETAK 2022a, pp. 258-264.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ COLLON 1975, p. 103; TEISSIER 1990; MÁLEK 1996; G.T. MARTIN 1999; WIMMER 2005.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ ‘ABD EL-MAKSOU, VALBELLE 2005, pp. 9-11, fig. 6a-b, pl. V.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ VILAIN 2023, 48-50.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ BIETAK 1991a, figs. 12, 13. For cultural hybridisation at Tell el-Dab’a see BADER 2013; BADER 2021.

⁽⁵⁸⁾ BIETAK 1991a, p. 41; BIETAK 2007, p. 775, fig. 19; BIETAK 2009, p. 222, figs. 14-15; V. MÜLLER 2008, pp. 281, 284, fig. 181.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ MÜLLER 2008, pp. 288-294, tab. 48.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ *Ibidem*.

buried individuals reveals changes in eating habits or food consumption as there was from the Hyksos Period onwards, i.e., less caries but more tooth abrasion.

In metal production, Middle Bronze Age weaponry shifted from Middle Bronze I to Middle Bronze II (MB IIA to MB IIB) forms. It appears, however, that tin was no longer available⁽⁶¹⁾. Metal tools and weapons were produced from pure copper, whereas previously, metal objects were made of bronze. During the Hyksos Period, Egypt appears to have been cut off from tin supplies, and no metal objects were deposited in tombs in the last phase of this period, probably a sign that metal had become scarce.

A new palace was built over the ruins of the 14th Dynasty palace. It was not an Egyptian palace, but rather a Near Eastern palace with similar features to Palace Q in Ebla⁽⁶²⁾ and an entrance arrangement akin to the Palace of Mari⁽⁶³⁾ (fig. 9).

Most importantly, the town expanded rapidly from c. 100 ha to c. 250 ha, and the settlement pattern became more condensed, suggesting a population increase at least three times larger than before the Hyksos Period, with an estimated population of c. 25,000 to 30,000 inhabitants (fig. 10)⁽⁶⁴⁾. Where did this surplus of people come from?

Because the newcomers were more acculturated than the inhabitants of the 14th Dynasty town, one has to seek Asiatic settlements within Egypt that may have served as a power base. Something like this cannot be found in the Delta except in Tell el-Dab'a, which was, however, the recipient of a new wave of immigration. The only remaining option is the reference to Asiatic settlements, referred to as *wn.wt* in the Illahun papyri, near the capital of the 12th and 13th Dynasties at Itjy-tawy, close to the region of Lisht. The excavations by the Metropolitan Museum under Arthur Mace revealed a settlement with intramural burials and dispersed Middle Bronze Age pottery dating to the 14th Dynasty⁽⁶⁵⁾. Nearby, at Abu Gurob, Middle Bronze Age toggle pins – part of the Near Eastern dress code – were found in secondary contexts⁽⁶⁶⁾. Our guess is that Asiatic communities near the residence first toppled the weakened 13th Dynasty and then plundered the elite necropoleis and the royal tombs nearby. In the subterranean serdab of Senwosret III's Pyramid at Dahshur, Asiatic men left graffiti with their images, most

⁽⁶¹⁾ PHILIPS 2006, pp. 208-214, tab. 17-21.

⁽⁶²⁾ MATTHIAE 1980; BIETAK 2010b; BIETAK 2010c; BIETAK 2011; MATTHIAE 2019, pp. 81-90, figs. 2, 5, 7.

⁽⁶³⁾ BIETAK et al. 2012/2013, pp. 22-29.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ BIETAK 2010a, pp. 11-14, fig. 9a-c.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ MACE 1908; MACE 1914; MACE 1921; MACE 1922; ARNOLD, ARNOLD, ALLEN 1995; ARNOLD 1996.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ PETRIE 1891, p. 19, pl. XXII/1-3.



Fig. 9. The palace of the Hyksos in Avaris showing also the remains of the palace of the 14th Dynasty place below and palace Q at Ebla (after BIETAK 2022a, fig. 15 and MATTHIAE 2019, fig. 2).

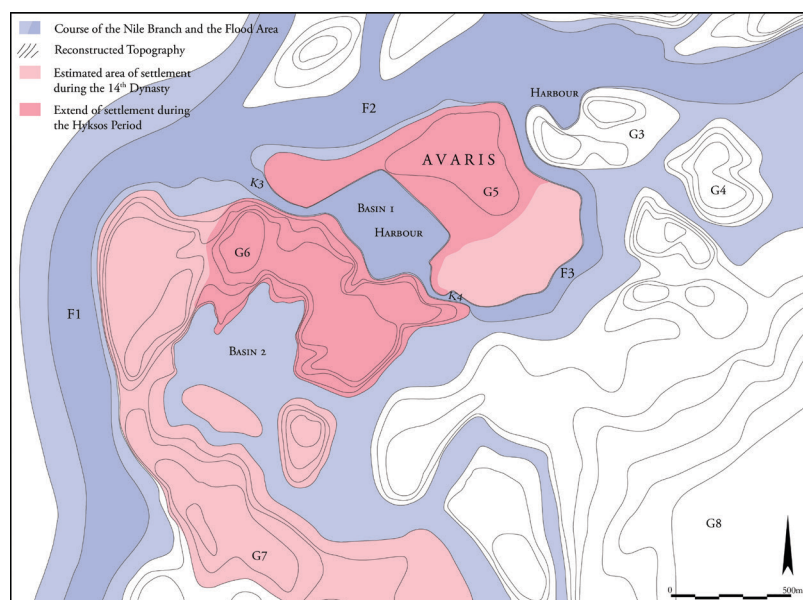


Fig. 10. The size of Avaris during the 14th and the 15th Dynasty (after BIETAK 2010a, figs. 9b-c).

likely during tomb robbing⁽⁶⁷⁾. The loot was traded via the 14th Dynasty in Avaris to Byblos and other royal towns in the Levant⁽⁶⁸⁾. The proof that the inhabitants of Avaris were involved in trading spoil from princely graves during the 14th Dynasty can be found in princely jewellery in an ordinary tomb of Phase F and in the alabaster lid of an ointment jar bearing the name of a Middle Kingdom princess in the 14th Dynasty palace⁽⁶⁹⁾. But soon, it appears the Asiatic population from the environs of Itjy-tawy abandoned their settlement at Lisht⁽⁷⁰⁾ and moved northwards to seize control of Avaris, burning the 14th Dynasty palace and introducing many new cultural features to the town. Aside from the growth of Avaris, a number of settlements of the same people began to spread in the Eastern Delta and the Wadi Tumilat, creating a secondary cultural homeland in Egypt for this foreign population.

During Hyksos rule, Egypt's foreign trade with the Levant, which had peaked in the early 14th Dynasty, plummeted⁽⁷¹⁾. Except for a few amphorae, hardly anything visible was imported from the Levant. It seems that the elite necropoleis were exhausted as barter for foreign trade. However, this loss was offset by the trade exchange with Cyprus, which must have been organised from Avaris' harbour. Copper was undoubtedly imported in addition to Middle Cypriot pottery, such as White Painted III/IV, White Painted V, and finally Proto White Slip Ware. Tell el-Yahudiya Ware from Egypt was exported to Cyprus, as evidenced in Middle Cypriot and Early Late Cypriot tombs⁽⁷²⁾. But this was surely not everything. More information regarding perishable organic matter is needed. The weakening of foreign trade during the Hyksos Period may have finally ended the power of the 15th Dynasty. However, in the 17th Dynasty Second Stela of King Kamose, who raided Avaris, we learn a different story. According to his words, he ransacked and destroyed hundreds of Hyksos ships, seizing cargo such as *gold, lapis-lazuli, silver, turquoise, innumerable bronze battle axes, apart from moringa oil, incense, fat, honey, itrn-wood, sndm-wood, spny-wood and all the precious wood of theirs, and all the good products of Retjenu*⁽⁷³⁾. We cannot trust all the information given because gold was always supplied by Egyp-

⁽⁶⁷⁾ DE MORGAN 1895, pp. 93-96, fig. 137-140; ARNOLD 2002, pl. 24-26; ARNOLD 2010, pp. 200-206, figs. 3-5.

⁽⁶⁸⁾ KOPETZKY, BIETAK 2016, p. 372; KOPETZKY 2018; KOPETZKY 2019/2020; KOPETZKY, AHRENS 2021; BIETAK 2022a.

⁽⁶⁹⁾ BIETAK 1981/1986, p. 242, pls. XI, XIII; BIETAK 1996, fig. 36, pl. IIB; FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2009, p. 111, fig. 29.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ F. ARNOLD 2010.

⁽⁷¹⁾ KOPETZKY 2019/2020, pp. 175-176, fig. 56; VILAIN 2021, pp. 324-328, figs. 7-8.

⁽⁷²⁾ BIETAK 1989, p. 16, figs. 11-14; ASTON, BIETAK 2012, figs. 147, 167, 182, 189, 201; VILAIN 2021, pp. 327-328, fig. 10.

⁽⁷³⁾ HABACHI 1972, p. 37.

tian sources, but the copper battle axes sound credible as axes were used as ingots, and the precious woods point towards trade with Lebanon. It is possible that trade with the Levant shifted from consumables traded in pots to other goods like valuable stones and precious woods. Leather bags might have been used to transport fat and honey. We have not found traces of all the commodities imported by the Hyksos from Asia and the Mediterranean because most of the organic matter would have been quickly absorbed by the moist and chemically aggressive Delta soil. There is also evidence that Egyptian exports to Ashkelon were augmented during the Hyksos Period⁽⁷⁴⁾.

Unexpectedly, there are some indications of long-distance trade with remote partners. There is an Akkadian letter fragment in southern Mesopotamian script, probably from Babylon, found in the well of the Hyksos palace⁽⁷⁵⁾, and, besides Syrian, there are also Akkadian seal impressions of bullae on organic containers such as bags or baskets⁽⁷⁶⁾, but their contents are unknown. Unfortunately, most, but not all, of these seal impressions were found in secondary contexts. The distribution of stone vessels with the name of the Hyksos Khayan in Knossos⁽⁷⁷⁾, Boğazköy⁽⁷⁸⁾, and a lion figure bearing the name of this king from Baghdad's antiquities market, in all likelihood originating from Babylon⁽⁷⁹⁾, all indicate contacts with these courts at least by Khayan. Another sign of Hyksos influence abroad is the scattering of Hyksos scarabs bearing royal names throughout the southern Levant⁽⁸⁰⁾, which led J. Weinstein and D. Ben-Tor to claim that the Hyksos originated from there⁽⁸¹⁾. Because the material culture of the southern Levant differs from that of the eastern Delta, it may be better to reverse the interpretation and take the evidence as a sign of the Hyksos kingdom's influence on the southern Levant. The strong fortification of southern Levantine towns in the late phase of the Middle Bronze Age may reinforce this, as the fortifications could also be interpreted as a precaution against an overpowering southern neighbour.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ STAGER, VOSS 2018.

⁽⁷⁵⁾ VAN KOPPEN, RADNER in: BIETAK et al. 2009, p. 108, pp. 115-118, figs. 21-22; BIETAK 2010b, pp. 986-990, figs. 13-14.

⁽⁷⁶⁾ VAN KOPPEN, LEHMANN 2022/2023, figs. 1A-B; COLLON, LEHMANN 2011; COLLON, LEHMANN, MÜLLER 2022/2023, pp. 102-103, fig. 8.

⁽⁷⁷⁾ PORTER, MOSS 1952 = PM VII, p. 405; WARREN, HANKEY 1989, p. 136.

⁽⁷⁸⁾ Museum Ankara 19.513: STOCK 1963, pp. 73-80.

⁽⁷⁹⁾ PORTER, MOSS 1952 = PM VII, p. 396.

⁽⁸⁰⁾ WEINSTEIN 1981, pp. 8-10, fig. 3; WEINSTEIN 1991, pp. 107-108.

⁽⁸¹⁾ WEINSTEIN 1981, pp. 8-10; BEN-TOR 2007, pp. 189-190.

According to the reverse of the mathematical Papyrus Rhind⁽⁸²⁾, the tomb inscription of Ahmose, son of Ibana⁽⁸³⁾, and relief blocks from the temple of King Ahmose I in Abydos⁽⁸⁴⁾, King Ahmose conquered Avaris after cutting off the frontier fortress Tjaru from the Hyksos capital. To date, history books have relied on the account of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus that the Hyksos (and their people) were expelled and relocated to the southern Levant (Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, I. 88-89). They did, indeed, retreat to Sharuhén, which king Ahmose could only capture after a three-year siege. Sharuhén's location is unknown. It is thought to have been situated at Tell el-Far'ah-South, but this is by no means certain. It might have been situated in the northern Sinai.

Contrary to the *opinio communis* in Egyptology, the majority of Avaris' inhabitants appear to have remained in Egypt. Many may have retreated to the Wadi Tumilat, which includes attested Asiatic settlements and tombs that were still in use in the New Kingdom. The victorious 18th Dynasty may have relocated the bulk of Avaris' population to major temples or upper-class households. However, a part must have remained because the ceramic industry at the site continues with the same hybrid corpus of Middle Bronze Age forms, and the metal industry, which furnished the army of the 18th Dynasty, continued with the Bronze Age typology and technology of bivalve models for short swords⁽⁸⁵⁾. A Near Eastern achievement that the Egyptians adopted was chariotry. They did, however, require the associated knowledge and skills to stable, groom, and train teams of horses. Expertise was also required by the former land power to cope with maritime affairs after seizing control of Egypt's most important port. Expelling all specialists in military production, horse training, and seafaring, besides many other skills like cultivating wine and producing oil, would have been a waste. Also, the new 18th Dynasty found the acquisition of the mercantile network trading with Cyprus and the Levant to be extremely beneficial.

Not only did Avaris' harbour persist and thrive under the 18th Dynasty, but so too did the worship of Near Eastern cults at the port of Peru-nefer, "the happy sortie", as the former harbour of Avaris was dubbed by the Tuthmosid kings. They established their main naval stronghold at this most ideal place, built a large palatial precinct (fig. 11), and took over a whole array of Canaanite cults, especially that of the Syrian storm god Ba'al Zephon from

(82) PEET 1923; ROBINS, SHUTE 1987.

(83) SETHE 1906 = Urk. IV, 4.10.

(84) HARVEY 1994; HARVEY 1998, figs. 76, 77, 82, 88, 97.

(85) For a recent overview of the takeover of Asiatic technology and typology of pottery and metal ware as well as Asiatic knowhow see MOURAD 2021.

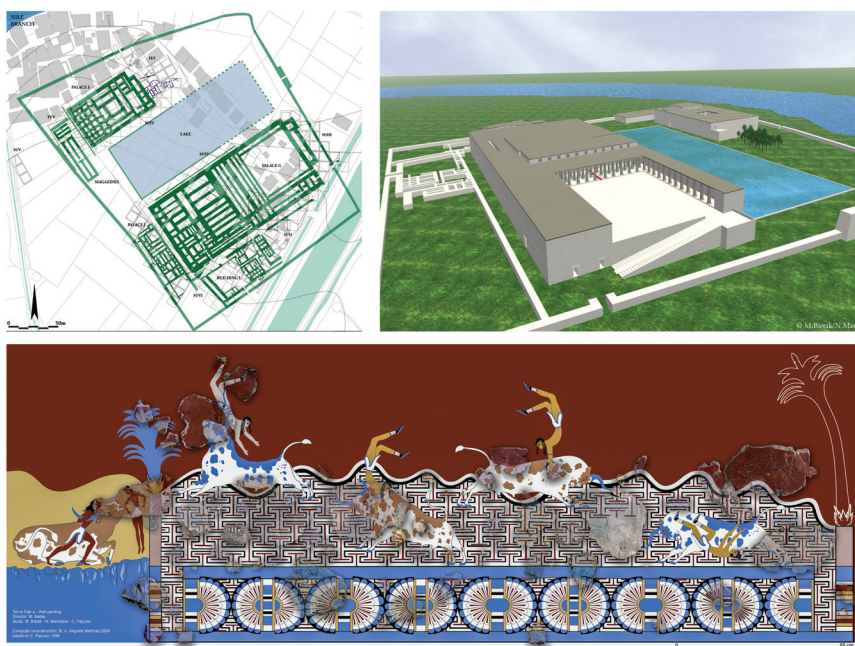


Fig. 11. The palatial compound of the Thutmosid Period at Tell el-Dab‘a, embellished with Minoan wall paintings (after BIETAK 2018c, fig. 4 and BIETAK, MARINATOS, PALYVOU 2007, fig. 59B)

the Hyksos⁽⁸⁶⁾. In the 19th Dynasty, he became the ancestor god – the “Father of the Fathers” – of the Ramessides, as expressed in the so-called Stela of 400 Years of Ramses II⁽⁸⁷⁾. It recalls the introduction of the Seth/Ba‘al cult in Avaris 400 years ago, during the 14th Dynasty, most probably under King Neḥesy (c. 1700 BCE)⁽⁸⁸⁾. According to Papyrus Anastasi III, 7.5-6, the residence town of Piraessse was “... *the marshalling place of thy [scil. the king’s] chariotry, the mustering place of thy army, the mooring place of thy ships’ troops*” during the 19th Dynasty⁽⁸⁹⁾. According to inscriptions on Naos doors, Avaris’ harbour was still referred to by the 20th Dynasty as

⁽⁸⁶⁾ STADELMANN 1967, pp. 41-43; BIETAK 1990.

⁽⁸⁷⁾ SETHE 1930; MONTET 1931; STADELMANN 1965; GOEDICKE 1966; GOEDICKE 1981; BIETAK 1990, Frontispiece; BIETAK 1994.

⁽⁸⁸⁾ VON BECKERATH 1964, p. 84; BIETAK 1984b; BIETAK 1990; BIETAK 2022a, pp. 254, 256, 266.

⁽⁸⁹⁾ CAMINOS 1954, p. 101.

the “Harbour of Avaris”⁽⁹⁰⁾. Afterwards, the estuary, known as the Pelusiac mouth by ancient authors, silted up and ceased to function as a seagoing harbour in the Delta’s easternmost branch. As a result, Piramesse was abandoned and lost its function to Tanis, which is located on the Nile’s Tanitic branch⁽⁹¹⁾.

II. BYBLOS

Byblos was one of the most successful harbour towns in the Levant, with a longstanding partnership with Egypt dating from the inception of the dynastic period onward⁽⁹²⁾. This can be explained by its position, facilities, and environment. Byblos, unlike Avaris and Piramesse, is not a deltaic in-shore harbour and has a far longer history. It is a nearly circular urban site from the late Chalcolithic Period and Early Bronze Age onwards and is situated directly on the sea (fig. 12). To the south, it possessed a natural harbour⁽⁹³⁾. There may have also been another smaller anchorage to its north, in the so-called Chamiyeh Bay, because the north-western gate of the town leads to this area.

At first glance, it is difficult to comprehend why this most important town is merely 6 ha in size. Jean-Claude Margueron, however, was able to show that what is visible today is only the acropolis surrounded in a semi-circle by a lower town that, according to his estimates, would have covered 100-150 ha and, therefore, also encircled its harbours (fig. 13)⁽⁹⁴⁾. This estimate places Byblos in a different light, making it more comparable to large towns in the Bronze Age Levant, which nearly all featured an acropolis and a lower town. This area compares favourably to that of important towns in the Middle Bronze Age, such as Qatna (c.100 ha) and Tell el-Dab’a with c. 100 ha in the 14th and c. 250 ha in the 15th Dynasty. We can only offer an account of the acropolis, which is located on a rocky mound, because the lower town of Byblos is now completely covered by modern settlement and hence unexplored. At its centre lay a deep-water spring, accessible by

⁽⁹⁰⁾ TURAYEV 1913, pp. 43-80, pl. 13; YOYOTTE 1971/1972, p. 172; BOGOSLOVSKY 1972; BIETAK 1975, p. 30.

⁽⁹¹⁾ BIETAK 1975.

⁽⁹²⁾ Important literature about the site: JIDÉJIAN 1968; MONTET 1922; MONTET 1928/1929; DUNAND 1926/1932; DUNAND 1933/1938; DUNAND 1952; M. SAGHIEH 1983; MARTIN 1996; LAUFFRAY 2008; MORAN 1992; KOPETZKY 2016; KERTAI, LENDERING 2022.

⁽⁹³⁾ GRIMAL, FRANCIS-ALOUCHE 2012; FRANCIS-ALOUCHE, GRIMAL 2016; FRANCIS-ALOUCHE, GRIMAL 2017; FRANCIS-ALOUCHE, GRIMAL 2019.

⁽⁹⁴⁾ MARGUERON 2013, pp. 197-198, fig. 168.



Fig. 12. The site of Byblos (Google Earth with the site of the ancient harbour according to the results of FRANCES-ALLOUCHE, GRIMAL 2017-2019 with entries, showing the position of its main temples).

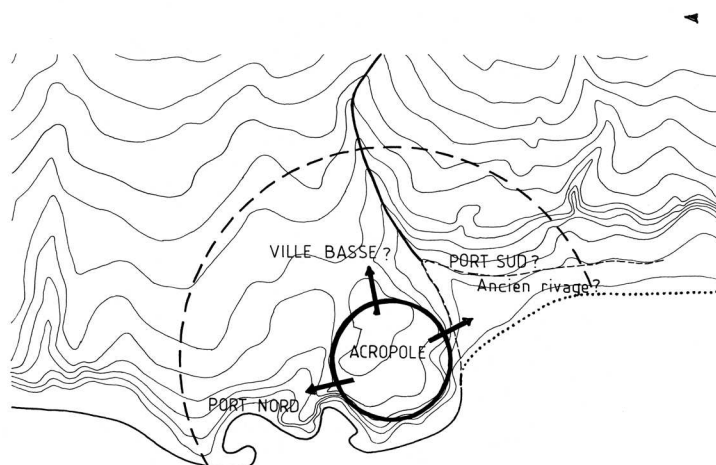


Fig. 13. The reconstruction of the upper and the lower town of Byblos in the Bronze Age (after J.-C. MARGUERON 2013, fig 8).

a long flight of stairs circling downward. This spring was not only vital for supplying the acropolis and passing ships, but also had a ritual function⁽⁹⁵⁾, as not less than four large temple precincts were built around it as far back as the Early Bronze Age⁽⁹⁶⁾. During the same time period, other shrines were distributed across the town.

Already in the 3rd millennium, the circular form of the acropolis and the temples gave the town and its streets an apparently organically developed structure. Nevertheless, the streets enclosing the centre of the acropolis, south of the main temples, have a more rectangular course, indicating an originally flexible layout. The radial streets did not cross this rectangle. The main temples might have expanded at the expense of former living quarters. The area of the acropolis was very restricted, and as a result, houses were packed close together, leaving no or little space for courtyards.

In the 3rd millennium, the acropolis was defended on its northern and eastern sides by a massive fortification wall endowed with glacis and a fosse. This measure safeguarded the town's land side. In 2019, two extended early Middle Bronze Age (MB I) hypogea were discovered. They were dug from outside the fortification wall, entering the town's subterranean ground on two to three levels⁽⁹⁷⁾. The hypogea contained burials in what seem to have been the final resting places of family clans. This may only be part of an extended burial ground in the town, providing us in the future with information on the social structure of Byblos at the time.

The main temples covered not less than 12-13% of the area of the acropolis. This conveys the town's religious importance, in addition to its prominent maritime function. Some shrines appear to have already been built in the Chalcolithic Period, when Byblos started its urban history, which lasted essentially until post-Roman times, interrupted for several short periods by destructions. The town's religious institutions seem to have developed far beyond its requirements. The temples were important not only for the inhabitants but also for an interregional community. This can only be explained by the town's significance in seafaring matters. *Ex-votos* such as stone anchors found in the *Obelisk Temple*⁽⁹⁸⁾ (fig. 17b), and at the *Temple à Escalier*

⁽⁹⁵⁾ PINNOCK 2016.

⁽⁹⁶⁾ DUNAND 1937/1939, pp. 27-41, 125-129, 271-273; DUNAND 1950, pls. XXXVII-XLII; DUNAND 1954/1958, pp. 480-481, 895-900, fig. 1007; BUSINK 1970, pp. 430-456; SAGHIEH 1983, pp. 119-128; LAUFFRAY 2008, pp. 81-82, 95-113, 135-145, 181-186, 211-213, 217-220, 225-231, 245-251, 275-277, 325-373, 391-395, 410-417; SALA 2007; SALA 2008b; SALA 2015).

⁽⁹⁷⁾ The hypogea were found by joint excavations of the Lebanese Antiquity Authorities and the Louvre and were partly shown 2022 in the Louvre and in the Leiden Museum in special exhibitions (but not yet presented in the catalogue, see KERTAI, LENDERING 2022).

⁽⁹⁸⁾ DUNAND 1954/1958, p. 471.

attest to this⁽⁹⁹⁾. These anchors, like those at the temple precinct of Ba‘al in Ugarit, were most probably deposited by mariners, perhaps after successfully weathering storms or mastering mercantile enterprises. Egypt, however, was the major power reaching out to Byblos, and from where a great number of precious Egyptian *ex-votos*, such as stone vessels with inscriptions, found their way to the different temple precincts. The oldest dates back to the 2nd Dynasty with an inscription by the Egyptian king Chaschemui⁽¹⁰⁰⁾. Numerous *ex-votos*, such as precious stone vessels and alabaster tables with inscriptions commissioned by kings from the 4th to the end of the 6th Dynasties, attest to the Egyptian crown’s reference and dedication to the divinities of Byblos, most notably the “Mistress of Byblos”, the “Ba‘alat”⁽¹⁰¹⁾. Her temple was the oldest, the first phase having already been built during the Chalcolithic Period, developing from a long-room temple to a deep Broad-Room Temple with a slim *procella* and a loggia with *antae* (fig. 14) during the Early Bronze Age. The shrine was oriented east-west, with the cult target to the west. In the Early Bronze Age, the Ba‘alat was already identified with the Egyptian goddess Hathor⁽¹⁰²⁾, who was, i.a., in charge of liminal regions, especially mines such as Serabit el-Khadem in the Sinai, where she was addressed as “Ba‘alat” by Asiatic miners participating in Egyptian expeditions in the so-called Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions that they invented. It is possible that the temple of Serabit el-Khadem dates back to a Canaanite temple already erected during the Old Kingdom and has good parallels with the shrines at Byblos⁽¹⁰³⁾.

In Byblos, Ba‘alat devotionalia are numerous and fragmented. It is feasible that her identification with Hathor extends back to the Old Kingdom. A fragmentary inscription on an alabaster table of this period mentions Hathor, and another fragment, perhaps from the same object, bears the inscription of the “Mistress of Byblos”⁽¹⁰⁴⁾. Hathor is also represented twice as a logogram on a cylinder seal, found in the Temple of Ba‘alat, bearing a hieroglyphic inscription dated to the Old Kingdom by Pierre Montet⁽¹⁰⁵⁾. The Byblite god Kha‘ytaw, “the burning one”, who can be identified with the god Reshef, is also mentioned on the same seal⁽¹⁰⁶⁾. An anthropomorphic golden situla with broad hips, a waist with a navel, but no upper body (fig. 15) may represent

⁽⁹⁹⁾ LAUFFRAY 2008, pp. 393-394, fig. 216, 216 bis.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ MONTET, 1928, p. 84, fig. 1.

⁽¹⁰¹⁾ SAGHIEH 1983, pp. 104-106; ESPINEL 2002, pp. 108-115.

⁽¹⁰²⁾ SCANDONE-MATTHIAE 1991.

⁽¹⁰³⁾ BIETAK 2021.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ DUNAND 1937/1939, p. 417 (no. 3233), pp. 909-910 (no. 6496), pls. 36, 38.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ MONTET 1923; KERTAI, LENDERING 2022, p. 59.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ MONTET 1923, pp. 185-192; STADELMANN 1967, p. 8, n. 2.

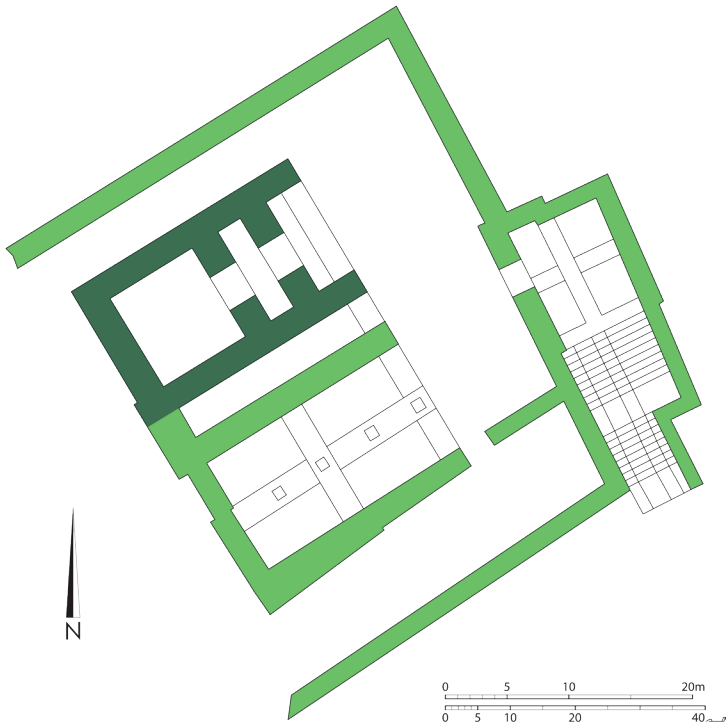


Fig. 14. The Ba'alat Temple in Byblos (after SAGHIEH 1983, pl. XVII).



Fig. 15. Golden situla from the Temple of Ba'alat in Byblos with the image of a small female soldered on the pubic region of this anthropomorphic vessel – probably the representation of the birth of Ba'alat (after DUNAND 1954/1958, 853, pl. CXXXVI, n. 16695).

how the original Ba'alat was conceived by the Byblites⁽¹⁰⁷⁾. A small figurine of a female with a long skirt is soldered to the anthropomorphic vessel's pubic region. Could this be a representation of the goddess's birth?

In the late phase of the Early Bronze Age and in the early phase of the Middle Bronze Age, the Temple of Ba'alat acquired a hall in addition to a corridor, most likely for stairs to the roof (fig. 14). It is considered a tower temple, but this interpretation is not universally accepted. In the south, a spacious hall was added, in which *ex-votos* were deposited or buried. Among them was the famous *Montet Jar*, which housed numerous *ex-votos*, including carinated metal bowls and other containers, torques, toggle pins, window-axes of gold, club-heads, jewellery, and Egyptian types of figurines of baboons, monkeys, pataikoi, scarabs, animal amulets, and pendants⁽¹⁰⁸⁾. They were probably originally deposited individually in the hall, then collected later and buried in a closed jar.

The "*Temple en L*" east of the spring (fig. 16a) was another important sanctuary. It was an Early Bronze Age triple shrine, with the cult target in the west⁽¹⁰⁹⁾. A cult axis was created by an obelisk in the east and the middle shrine in the west. It is unclear whether the obelisk had the same function as those in Egypt, i.e., as a rest station for the sun, or whether the obelisk should be considered a *masseba/betyl*, i.e., a stela commemorating an important person (a king?). In the Middle Bronze Age, following the *Temple en L*'s final destruction, the famous Temple of Obelisks was built on top of it. Some elements of the older temple were reused.

The Temple of Obelisks comprised two shrines: the main temple, which most probably had a roofless deep broad-room *cella*, and a cult podium located exactly above the cult podium of the central shrine of the Early Bronze Age triple temples (fig. 16b). Also, the Obelisk Temple had a cult axis and a cult target in the west. A *procella* in the form of a single-room Bent-Axis temple was also present. Between the two shrines, there was an opening with access to the courtyard that enclosed the sacred precinct. Within this courtyard, there were small altars, single and groups of obelisks, which may represent family memorials. Therefore, the function of the obelisks, like that of the previous *Temple en L*, appears to be more a memorial for the deceased⁽¹¹⁰⁾. A hieroglyphic inscription of a *h'ty-ꜥ n Kpny* "gover-

⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ DUNAND 1954/1958, p. 853, pl. CXXXVI, n. 16695; PINNOCK 2012, p. 87, fig. 2.

⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ MONTET 1928/1929, pp. 129-139, pls. LX-LXXI; TUFNELL, WARD 1966.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ DUNAND 1954/1958, pp. 895-898, fig. 1007, pls. XXXVII-XLII; FINKBEINER 1981, pp. 52-60, plans 1-2; SAGHIEH 1983, pp. 14-24, fig. 7a, pls. II-III; LAUFFRAY 2008, pp. 101-104, 217-220, 333-338; SALA 2008b; SALA 2015, pp. 39-41, figs. 9-11, 13.

⁽¹¹⁰⁾ Already in the Old Kingdom of Egypt, small obelisks carried the connotation of resurrection (MARTIN 1963, pp. 48-62, 223-229; MARTIN 1982), and a Middle Kingdom obelisk, found at Serabit el Khadem, inscribed with the names of three soldiers bearing semitic names,



Fig. 16. The *Temple en L* (after LAUFFRAY 2008, plans IX, X) and the Temple of Obelisks (after FINKBEINER 2008, Beilagen IV–V).

nor/mayor of Byblos” with the name *Iby-Shemu*, beloved of (the Egyptian god) *Herishef-Re* was found on an obelisk north of the main temple. The name *Herishef* means “*He, who is over his lake*”⁽¹¹¹⁾. Indeed, a sacred lake was situated just north of the temple. The sacred lake from which *Herishef* derived his name appears to have its origin in the Egyptian town of *Heracléopolis* (e.g., “*Nn-nsw*” = “the child of the king”) near the entrance to the *Fayum*, where, according to the *Palermo stone*, a sacred lake already existed during the 1st Dynasty⁽¹¹²⁾. Its function may have been for ritual cleansing. This was the original abode of the god *Herishef*. It appears that the worship of this god was established as an affiliated cult in *Byblos*. This god appears to have been identified with the *Canaanite* god *Reshef* on phonetic grounds⁽¹¹³⁾. *W.F. Albright* rejected this equation⁽¹¹⁴⁾, although *Herishef* was also mentioned as the patron deity of another governor of *Byblos* named *Nehy*⁽¹¹⁵⁾. His seal impression was found in *Alalakh*, but the seal belonged to the “*Green Jasper Workshop*”, which was located by *Dominique Collon* in *Byblos*⁽¹¹⁶⁾. On the representation of the seal, the governor of *Byblos* stands between the gods *Herishef* and *Sopdu*⁽¹¹⁷⁾; the latter is a god who, in his anthropomorphic image as an *Asiatic*, represents the eastern *Delta*, where people from the *Levant* have settled since time immemorial. The cult of *Herishef* was most likely established in *Byblos* during the late *Old Kingdom*, providing, in addition to “*Hathor, Mistress of Byblos*”, a second strong religious link between *Egypt* and *Byblos*.

Numerous *ex-votos*, including original *Egyptian faience figurines*, were discovered in eight *cachettes* in the temple court and the two temples⁽¹¹⁸⁾. Partly gilded *bronze figurines* depicting male figures are especially noteworthy⁽¹¹⁹⁾. They are represented, clad in a *kilt* or *nude*. The latter may have

shows that among people from the *Levant*, obelisks functioned as *massebot/betyls*, commemorating people. About the meaning of *amorphous stelae* in the *Near east* see: *POPKO* 1993; *HUTTER* 1993; *METTINGER* 1995, p. 181; *DE MOOR* 1995; *VAN DEN TOORN* 1997; *FICK* 2004; *STEIMER-HERBET* (ed.) 2011; *HEFFRON* 2016 (with an update of all relevant literature).

⁽¹¹¹⁾ *DUNAND* 1954/1958, *Atlas*, pl. XXXII/2; *PORTER, MOSS* 1995 (PM VII), p. 387; *ALBRIGHT* 1959, p. 33; *MONTET* 1962, pp. 89-90; *JIDEJIAN* 1968, pl. 68; *MOURAD* 2015, p. 166.

⁽¹¹²⁾ Lit. *LEITZ* (ed.) 2002, p. 382.

⁽¹¹³⁾ *MONTET* 1962, p. 89 f.; see also *LEITZ* (ed.), 2002a, pp. 381-383.

⁽¹¹⁴⁾ *ALBRIGHT* 1959, p. 33.

⁽¹¹⁵⁾ *Beatrice Teissier* (*TEISSIER* 1990, pp. 66-67) identified these gods with *Chnum* and *Month*, but *Geoffrey Martin* (*MARTIN* 1998; *MARTIN* 1999, p. 204) was able to identify the deities as *Herishef* and *Sopdu* based on their iconicity.

⁽¹¹⁶⁾ *COLLON* 1986; *COLLON* 2001.

⁽¹¹⁷⁾ *TEISSIER* 1990, pp. 66-67; *MARTIN* 1998; *MARTIN* 1999, p. 204; *WIMMER* 2005, pp. 127-132.

⁽¹¹⁸⁾ *MINIACI* 2018; *MINIACI, SALER* 2021.

⁽¹¹⁹⁾ *DUNAND* 1954/1958, pp. 948-954; *NEGBI* 1976; *NEGBI, MOSKOWITZ* 1966; *SEEDEN* 1980.

been dressed in fabric gowns or kilts. The completeness of the reproductive nature of represented individuals was also considered important in the statuary of the later Old Kingdom in Egypt. Because of their high conical crowns, these figurines seem at first glance to represent princes, but they are far too numerous to be identified as images of specific princes. Our hypothesis is that they represent ordinary people who, in the netherworld, could attain the status of princes. This would be analogous to the Egyptian religious concept of the vegetation god Osiris as the king of the netherworld, with whom originally only pharaohs could become identical, but by the late Old Kingdom, ordinary individuals could also become identical⁽¹²⁰⁾. If this paradigm holds true for the Byblites, it would be yet another sign of Egyptian religious influence on Byblos. Given that the Osiris myth of a vegetation god who dies and is reborn every year parallels Near Eastern religious concepts⁽¹²¹⁾, it is easy to imagine that such ideas of rebirth as a king would have been widely accepted in Byblos.

South-west of the spring is another important temple, the so-called “*Temple à Escalier*” because monumental stairs rise up from the north to the nearly square platform on which the temple stood. According to the archaeological remains, it was a deep Broad-Room Temple *in antis*, with the cult target trained to the south, towards the harbour. In the lowermost step of the staircase were embedded five stone anchors, formerly *ex-votos* for the tutelary divinity of this temple, who, in parallel with the temple of Ba‘al at Ugarit, which likewise had deposited anchors, must have been a god connected to seafaring. Since the temples of the Syrian storm god, such as at Ugarit, Karkemish, Alalakh, and later at Hazor, are oriented towards the north, the *Temple à Escalier* is oriented to the south. This could be explained, on the one hand, by the harbour, which may have had an additional shrine for the god, or because this temple served a different god connected to the sea, perhaps Yam.

Aside from larger shrines like the “*Temple Oriental*”, there were several other temples on the acropolis and also small station temples along certain roads that signalled processions at given festivities.

When sailing from Avaris and passing the northern coast of the Sinai peninsula, Byblos was one of the numerous ports⁽¹²²⁾ located in short bursts of 30 to 50 km along the Levantine coast from Tell el-‘Ajjul/Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Jaffa, Dor, Akko, Tyrus, Sidon, Beirut, Byblos, Ullaza, Irqata, Sumur, Arwad, and Ugarit. The series continued further north and along the southern coast of Asia Minor. There were also smaller anchorages in

⁽¹²⁰⁾ SCHARFF 1947; GRIFFITH 1980.

⁽¹²¹⁾ GRIFFITH 1980, pp. 87-88; GRIFFITH 1982, p. 624.

⁽¹²²⁾ DE GRAAUW 2017, see also <http://www.ancientportsantiques.com/docs-pdf/>.

between. These short distances between harbours were essential, as they offered refuge for ships during storms. This was especially critical during the winter months, when winds from the south and south-west allowed for easy northward sailing but could develop into storms. On the other hand, northward sailing was difficult in the regular northerly good weather winds.

Why did Byblos gain more and longer-lasting importance over other harbour towns? A series of reasons can be advanced to explain the importance of this town. Because of its position, this principality enjoyed a virtual monopoly on cedarwood and developed highly specialised craftsmanship in woodworking⁽¹²³⁾. Because of the high quality of the cedars and their long and sturdy trunks, there was a continuous demand for this wood for prestigious constructions such as palaces, where halls of impressive width could be created. This was important not just for Egypt's royal court but for all the kingdoms and principalities of the Levant. Cedarwood is also the best material to build large seagoing ships. Long, firm planks could be carved that hardly warped when in water. The Byblites were highly skilled shipbuilders. It is unknown whether the so-called *kpny*-ships (=Byblite ships), known from Egyptian records from the late Old Kingdom onwards, were produced in Byblos on demand or if Byblites worked in Egyptian shipyards. Both options were probably realised. From the Old Kingdom onward, Byblites were also used by the Egyptian crown as experienced mariners. A narrative from the early 5th Dynasty's King Sahure' shows a fleet of ships returning from the Levant loaded with commodities from this region⁽¹²⁴⁾. These ships were manned and steered by typical Western Asiatic mariners, complete with wives and children⁽¹²⁵⁾. About a century later, reliefs on the causeway of the pyramid of King Unas, the last king of the 5th Dynasty, show explicitly that sea-bound navigation was crewed by Asiatics, while river-bound navigation was crewed by Egyptians⁽¹²⁶⁾. During the Old and Middle Kingdoms, cedarwood for coffins and pitch was in high demand in Egypt for the burial of upper-class individuals and the mummification process. The cultural evidence at Avaris and its harbour makes it also highly likely that the demand in the Middle Kingdom (12th and 13th Dynasties) for expertise in building and handling ships was one reason the Egyptian crown established a town for Asiatics in a place with harbour facilities in the eastern Delta.

This unique situation made Byblos rich and led to another advantage for this harbour town. It could trade Egyptian imports with other courts in the Levant and Cyprus. During the 14th Dynasty (c. 1720-1640 BCE), the

⁽¹²³⁾ BARDINET 2008; RICH 2017.

⁽¹²⁴⁾ BORCHARDT 1910/1913, pp. 27, 28, 87, Blätter 12, 13.

⁽¹²⁵⁾ BIETAK 1988, pls. 7-9.

⁽¹²⁶⁾ *Ibidem*, 36-38, pls. 8-9.

spoils from plundering royal and elite tombs, and treasures from temples in the Memphite area, were sold in exchange for other commodities to power centres in the Levant, and the barter was traded back to Egypt and other places⁽¹²⁷⁾. It also profited at times from the trade between Egypt and Cyprus. This was the town's situation throughout the Early and Middle Bronze Ages, interrupted by the First Intermediate Period. In the Hyksos Period, Byblos had limited contact with Egypt but could maintain its standards through its mercantile network in the Levant and the eastern Mediterranean.

Byblos regained its importance as a harbour town in the 18th Dynasty from the time of Thutmose III (c. 1479-1425 BCE) onwards. He transformed Egypt from a landlocked to a maritime power, and he needed timber to build ships. His architect, Min-mose, built a temple for the Ba'alat of Byblos⁽¹²⁸⁾. In the Amarna Period, as Egypt's superpower grip weakened under Akhenaten (c. 1348-1331 BCE), the town and its prince became the victims of intrigues by the princes of Amurru. It may have recovered when Egypt regained control of its part of the Levant under Horemheb (c. 1314-1301 BCE) and Seti I (c. 1300-1290 BCE). The princes of Lebanon can be seen cutting down cedar trees for Egypt on the southern outer wall of the Temple of Amun at Karnak. Little is known of what transpired afterwards, but according to the literary papyrus Moscow 127, Byblos re-emerges as an independent power at the end of the 20th Dynasty or even later, when the Egyptian emissary had to beg for timber for the Amun Temple at Thebes⁽¹²⁹⁾.

⁽¹²⁷⁾ KOPETZKY 2016, pp. 143-159; KOPETZKY 2019/2020; AHRENS, KOPETZKY 2021; BI-ETAK 2022a, pp. 242-266.

⁽¹²⁸⁾ SETHE 1906 (Urk. IV), 1443, 19.

⁽¹²⁹⁾ GARDINER 1932, pp. 61-75; KOROSTOVTSSEV 1961; SCHIPPER 2005; WINAND 1992; SASS 2002.

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