

Charles University

Faculty of Arts

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Bachelor thesis

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„I will lead the army on water and on land.”

**Towards the possible Origins of the pharaonic Red Sea
navigation.**

„Povedu armádu po vodě i po zemi”.
K možnému původu faraonské námorní plavby v Rudém moři.

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Vedoucí práce: Prof. Miroslav Bárta, Dr.

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Prohlášení:

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně, že jsem řádně citoval všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

V Praze, dne 8. srpna 2023.

Illia Semenenko

Abstract:

This thesis focuses on contacts of Egypt with the Land of Punt in the earliest period. It is important to investigate how the authorities of the ancient Egyptian civilization began to develop their long-term interactions with Punt via the Red Sea. Archaeological, textual and iconographic sources that reveal these interconnections are examined. Based on the evidence assembled, the origin and development of Egypt – Punt interconnections are discussed. The study is chronologically focused on the period from the 4th to the 6th Dynasty of the Old Kingdom.

Key words:

Punt, incense, Old Kingdom, interconnections, Red Sea

Abstrakt:

Bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na kontakty Egypta a Puntu v nejstarším období. Je důležité prozkoumat, jak vláda staroegyptské civilizace rozvíjela své dlouhodobé interakce s Puntem přes Rudé moře. Jsou zkoumány archeologické, textové a ikonografické prameny, které tato propojení odhalují. Na základě analýzy těchto pramenů autor diskutuje vznik a vývoj kontaktů Egypta a Puntu. Studie je chronologicky zaměřena na období od 4. do 6. dynastie Staré říše.

Klíčová slova:

Punt, kadidlo, Stará říše, propojení, Rudé moře

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1. Introduction

1.1. General introductory remarks

The human mind, due to its natural curiosity, always looks for something new to discover. Particularly alluring in this respect are objects, matters or places which are known for the person seeking them as “exotic”. Under this term, two main concepts usually hide. In a narrower sense, what is “exotic” is *not native* to the place from which it is referred to, in other words simply foreign. Respectively, “exotic” region, country or environment lay indeed far away and are not easily accessible. Related to this, the more general sense implies that what is “exotic” is *strikingly, excitingly, or mysteriously different or unusual*¹.

This concept is probably one of the major reasons, if not the main one, for such a great interest in ancient Egypt, its culture, religion and natural environment from the general western public from the Roman times back to the modern era. Back in the 19th century the country in the Nile Valley could be considered as a “golden standard” of exotic. The decipherment of the Egyptian writing system in the 1820s bolstered the interest in Egypt even more.

However, the deepening of the Western and modern Egyptian knowledge of the Egyptian past made its inevitable influence. Due to unnumerable excavations conducted both along the Egyptian Nile and in the Deserts, and the amount of Egyptological literature which has increased many times compared with the Nineteenth century, Egypt became in a sense “less exotic”, for it is not so unknown or at least unusual to the modern Egyptologist as it was for contemporaries of Champollion. By a curious coincidence, the expansion of knowledge of the ancient Egyptian written sources led to the development of modern scientific interest in areas that the ancient Egyptians themselves considered “exotic”², and their mutual influence with Egypt. Thus, a prominent place in the research of the last three decades has been occupied by studies focusing on the ancient Egyptian interconnections with the neighboring regions, close and distant, primarily to northwest and south from Egypt. The benefits of this focus are two-sided. Firstly, revealing the archaeological evidence of interaction of these regions with Egypt can provide substantial evidence which can be useful for better understanding of various processes taking place in Egypt herself³. Secondly, these studies can develop over time into

¹ For both definitions and relevant examples see Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Exotic. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved May 7, 2023, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/exotic>

² See for example Mumford 2012: 110, 117; Fattovich 2018: 205.

³ Good examples are works of several prominent figures in the early history of Egyptology, in particular George Andrew Reisner’s excavations in Kerma and Sir W. M. F. Petrie’s work in Sinai and Levant.

separate disciplines focusing on their respective regions. Scientific work within the abovementioned frames also has a potential to produce multi-disciplinal volumes, where the work of scholars studying different areas is presented in order to find answers on particular questions common to different regions. An excellent volume of this sort was published in 2021 by profs. Pierre Tallet and Mark Lehner – “The Red Sea scrolls: how ancient papyri reveal the secrets of the pyramids”. By combining evidence from the Red Sea shore and Memphite area, the volume makes a significant contribution to knowledge about the construction of the Great Pyramid of Khufu at Giza and its relevance to the Red Sea studies.

The present author’s interest in the topic was originally due to the fact that the question of the maritime contacts of Egypt with the southern Red Sea region is studied indeed insufficiently if compared to the rich bibliography available on the country’s interactions in the northern (Greece and the Aegean⁴) and especially north-east (the Levant and the wider Near East) directions. This is particularly true for the earlier periods – mostly the 3rd millennium BC. However, this era, being a formative period in the history of the Ancient Egyptian civilization, is very important for the studies in question. Indeed, as noted by Mohamed Megahed:

*“The beginnings are always an important stage of our understanding of the nature and the essence of the subjects of study.”*⁵

To the present author’s knowledge, nowadays there is no scientific consensus on the nature of the process that led the early Egyptian state to organize maritime trade expeditions to the southern regions via the Red Sea. This must have happened at some moment during the Old Kingdom, when the royal authority was strong enough to deal successfully with such a difficult task as launching a long-distance trade expedition. The Old Kingdom is known for being the time of several major breakthroughs in various aspects of the ancient Egyptian life⁶, such as consolidation of the royal power and state administration, first large-scale mining operations on the Sinai, or the emergence of first the royal mortuary monumental architecture built completely of stone.

From the very beginning of the Predynastic period the Egyptian interactions with the Red Sea has gone through a long path of development⁷. New trade routes were developed, and

⁴ Contacts of Egypt with this region are discussed in numerous books and articles. Among the best and newest publications Merrillees 1998 and Adams – Sowada 2023 can be mentioned.

⁵ Megahed 2022: 347.

⁶ The outline of the Egyptian society in the Old Kingdom is described in Bárta 2020 and Bussmann 2020. ⁷ For the activities of 1st Dynasty Kings on the shores of the Red Sea see for example Tallet 2010.

new interactions brought to the Nile valley many resources essential for the development of an early state. In the 5th Dynasty first explicit evidence for a state-controlled seaborne expedition, which was dispatched under the authority of the king Sahure⁸ is usually seen as a result of the long history of Egyptian interactions with the Red Sea and a valuable source of study implying the prosperity of the country at that particular period. However, a definite hypothesis on the possible origins of the pharaonic Red Sea navigation seems to be lacking. In this light it is important to investigate how the authorities of the riverine ancient Egyptian civilization started to develop their long-term interactions with the southern regions of the Red Sea and how did this process develop during the Old Kingdom⁹. In the early preparation stages of the present thesis, the author considered a chronological possibility to connect the migrations of the proto-Northeast Sudanic-speaking populations from the Wadi Howar into the Middle Nile Valley¹⁰ in the 3rd millennium BC and development of the Egyptian navigation as a consequence of a large-scale building activities of the Old Kingdom kings. Following the works of several renowned scholars in relevant disciplines, such as Pierre Tallet, Mark Lehner, Claude Rilly and Gerrit Dimmendaal, the author put efforts into shaping a theory on how the two abovementioned processes in the 3rd millennium BC Memphite area and the Middle Nile Valley, although seemingly unrelated, could be a direct stimulus for the start of large-scale interactions of the ancient Egyptian state with the southern parts of the Red Sea. However, this project proved to be unsuitable for the present thesis due to its exceedingly wide scope, insufficient time resource needed for the high-quality research of this scope and the limited volume of the BA thesis. As a result of consultations with the supervisor, it was decided to narrow the scope of the thesis, leaving all material related to the Middle Nile Valley outside of it. This necessary procedure would make the present BA thesis an indispensable first step in the possible interdisciplinary integrated study of the 3rd millennium BC Egypt and the Middle Nile Valley in search of a stimulus for the start of large-scale activities of the ancient Egyptian state on the Red Sea.

The abovementioned reduction of the scope of the thesis caused an inevitable shift in the objectives of study. Thus, the first objective is to define as much as possible available

⁸ El-Awady 2009: Pl. 5.

⁹ In the present thesis the chronological era referred to as “Old Kingdom” corresponds to the period spanning from the beginning of the 3rd to the end of the 6th Dynasty, without the modern inclusion of the 8th Dynasty, as is proposed in Papazian 2015.

¹⁰ Rilly 2011: 18–20.

sources on maritime contacts of Egypt with the Land of Punt¹¹ during the Old Kingdom. These sources, unfortunately, are scarce due to the distant chronological era to which they belong. However, even these few sources should be carefully examined in order to avoid any possible false data deriving from them. Accordingly, the following **criteria of relevance** of sources for the present thesis were established:

- 1) **The source should be firmly dated to the abovementioned period.** The undated or dubiously dated sources cannot be used, in order to avoid any anachronism in the study.
- 2) **The source can have direct mention of the Land of Punt.** This name was a common ancient Egyptian designation of the southern regions approachable via the Red Sea. However, many sources relevant to the present study does not have this toponym connected to them. This is particularly true to non-textual sources.
- 3) **The source should have reference both to the Red Sea and to exotic imports from the regions to the south/southeast of Egypt.** These commodities, for example, monkeys, leopard skins, slave dwarfs or various types of fragrant substances¹², arrived to Egypt not only on the expeditionary ships owned by a king, but also via the Nile and were brought by caravans of donkeys via the on-land trade routes¹³, and thus are the sources which are not relevant for the present thesis.
- 4) **The source should be royal or connected to the royal sphere.** This applies mainly to textual and iconographic sources. However, many archaeological sources can also be associated with the royal court.

The second objective of the thesis is to discuss the origins and development of the seaborne contacts of Egypt and the Land of Punt during the Old Kingdom based on the evidence assembled, set a possible chronological frame for the emergence of the maritime contacts with the southern Red Sea region, and highlight factors that influenced the development of the aforementioned interconnections from the Egyptian geographical point of view. It is important

¹¹ It is necessary to note that the present thesis is not focused on the discussion on the precise location of the region which the ancient Egyptians denoted as the Land of Punt. Instead, the author relies on the research produced by other scholars such as Fattovich, Manzo and Breyer, and refers by the term “*Punt*” to the region lying southeast of Egypt, precisely, to the south of 20° N latitude, immediately adjacent to the southern part of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, and as far west inland as Kassala. For the necessary references and a concise discussion on this important topic see Fattovich 2018: 205ff.

¹² See Mumford 2012: 256–272 for a table including the occurrences of all these commodities in the Old Kingdom. ¹³ The most famous of these on-land and riverine trade ventures dating to the Old Kingdom are the journeys of Harkhuf, see Lichtheim 2006: 23–27 and Cooper 2012: 5–11.

to draw conclusions on the evidence assembled, for without the conclusions the assembled sources are nearly useless.

The relevant sources are discussed in the chronological order in two main chapters, each of which is dealing with the particular periods in the Old Kingdom history. First chapter is dedicated to the Early Old Kingdom and is centered around the two principal reigns of the early 4th Dynasty – those of Snefru and his son Khufu. Second chapter describes the second part of the Old Kingdom by focusing on the reigns of Sahure and Djedkare Isesi from the 5th Dynasty and the later evidence attributable to the 6th Dynasty. The chapters are preceded by an introduction of incense as a luxurious and “exotic” commodity and its significance for the ancient Egyptian civilization. Incense was the most desired product from Punt and the main *raison d'être* of the expeditions to the southern lands, thus a discussion on this commodity should be an integral part of the present thesis. The chapters are followed by conclusions drawn about the development of Egypt – Punt interconnections in the early period of the Ancient Egyptian history based on the sources, and future prospects of study are outlined. The main part of the thesis is supplemented by Annex 1, which consist of a table that includes all sources on the Egypt – Punt interconnections dating to the Old Kingdom, which were found relevant by the author in accordance with the above relevance criteria. The table can serve as a useful tool to help readers to draw their own conclusions and compare them with those of the author.


1.2. Incense and its significance for ancient Egyptian civilization

Incense of various kinds was highly praised among the Egyptians. Numerous expeditions went to distant countries to obtain it. The Egyptians crossed the natural borders between the Nile valley and the desert in search of the aromatics, thus leaving the world familiar to them and crossing the inhospitable desert tracks. The importance of incense for the present thesis focused on the origins and the early period of the Egypt – Punt interconnections lies in the fact that incense was the primary driving force behind these interconnections. In fact, from the Ancient Egyptian point of view, incense (especially its type referred to as *ꜥntyw*, but other kinds were also obtained; see below) was the most important product coming from Punt¹⁴. It was mainly incense that shaped the main economic, religious and political interest of the Egyptians in this remote country. The primary importance of incense to the pharaonic

¹⁴ Kees 1961: 112, Creasman & Yamamoto 2019: 350.

expeditions is evident in the fact that one of the regions of Punt at least from the New Kingdom on¹⁵ was known as the *ḥtyw nw ʕntyw* – “Terraces of Incense”¹⁶. This southern Red Sea toponym that testifies to the abundance of various kinds of aromatics in the region was in clear dichotomy with the *ḥtyw nt mfk3t* – “Terraces of Turquoise”, the turquoise and copper-bearing region situated in the Sinai – at the North of the Red Sea. However, as the Sinai and other foreign regions, Punt was the source of other products besides ʕntyw-incense. These included costly woods such as ebony¹⁷, “gold of Punt”, animal products such as ivory or leopard skins, eyepaint and peculiar type of sticks called *tni3*. However, almost all these commodities were also imported from other African markets, notably from the numerous caravan routes of the Western Desert¹⁸. Moreover, Egyptian sources name among the imports several other types of incense, such as *sntr*-incense and *šs3t*-incense¹⁹. That’s why it would be useful to briefly discuss the most important types of incense mentioned in the Egyptian sources, namely *sntr*, *šs3t*, *3ntyw*, and *ʕndw*.

“Incense” is a general term used in a widely sense to denote a “material used to produce a fragrant odor when burned”²⁰. This is the reason why it was chosen for the caption of the present subchapter, as it is wide enough to encompass all the Ancient Egyptian terms mentioned above. Ancient Egyptians clearly distinguished different types of aromatic substances which they used as incense. This is confirmed by the fact that different materials bore different names in the same inscription. Their attestation also differed chronologically.

 *sntr* is probably one of the earliest types of incense attested in the Egyptian sources. The name of this resinous aromatic, being composed of the root *ntr* and prefix *s-*, probably derives from the Ancient Egyptian causative *sntr*, which literally means “to make

¹⁵ The toponym is attested for the first time in the temple of Hatshepsut in Deir el-Bahari, see Sayed, Abdel Monem A. H. 2003: 432, footnotes 4, 5.

¹⁶ The translation of the toponym *ḥtyw nt ʕntyw* presents certain difficulties. Abdel Monem A. H. Sayed (2003: 432) translates it “The Frankincense terraces of Punt”, thus equating ʕntyw with one strictly defined kind of aromatic resins, namely frankincense – the product of *Boswellia* species. However, James H. Breasted (1906b: 117) translated the toponym as “the Myrrh-terraces”. More recently Tarek el-Awady (2009: 255–256), agreeing with Breasted, claimed ʕntyw indeed to be myrrh, another aromatic resin obtained from the trees of the *Commiphora* genus. The present author thus prefers to use in the thesis the neutral translation „Terraces of Incense”. This translation well might correspond to the general idea behind the Egyptian toponym *ḥtyw nt ʕntyw* as the place from where the aromatics in general are obtained.

¹⁷ The problem of ebony in the context of interactions between Egypt and Punt is discussed in the Chapter 2, pp. 28–30.

¹⁸ Kees 1961: 113.

¹⁹ Cooper 2012: 5. A good example for such a selection of imports from the South is the inscription of Harkhuf, Urk.I, 126–127, translated in Lichtheim 2006: 23–27.

²⁰ Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Incense. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved July 4, 2023, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/incense>

divine”. Keeping this in mind, it is not surprising that the earliest major occurrences of the term *sntr* are found in the Pyramid Texts. These texts are preserved on the walls of the inner structures of the pyramids belonging to the rulers of the last Fifth Dynasty King Unis and his successors from the Sixth Dynasty, as well as several of their royal wives²¹. They are the testimony of the earliest religious ceremonies and rituals connected to the royal mortuary cult of the Egyptian kingdom, some of the texts going back to the time of the unification or even earlier. In these relatively early religious texts *sntr* already occupies a very distinguished place. For example, PT 200 explicitly connects *sntr*-incense with the god²² by using a favourite poetical device of the Ancient Egyptians – a wordplay:

*ind hr=k, sntr, ind hr=k, sn ntr*²³ [...]

The passage reveals another possible level of the meaning of the name of *sntr* – a theological one. The aromatic substance is described as a “brother of god” or, alternatively, as his “second”, *i.e.*, his manifestation. In any case, strong and explicit connection with the divine is evident from the very name of the substance. Graphically it is demonstrated by the sign R8 from the Gardiner’s Sign List, which is almost always present in the orthographical variations. The nature of the sign might not be only phonetical, but, as Gardiner states²⁴, semi-ideographical.

The place of origin of *sntr*-incense in the earlier periods of the Egyptian history is almost always associated with Nubia²⁵. Thus, Creasman and Yamamoto cite the passage from another text PT 459²⁶, where *sntr* belonging to the deceased King is said to be *m t3-sty* – in/from Nubia. The important textual evidence as PT 459 might indicate that Nubia was the major producer of *sntr*-incense for Egypt²⁷ already from the earlier part of the Old Kingdom, and not only from the later periods of the Pharaonic history. The connection between *sntr*-incense and Nubia is strengthened by several mentions of the substance in the Pyramid Texts in association with certain divinities of Nubian origin, most notably, Dedwen²⁸. Allen laconically describes him as “God of Nubia and Nubian incense”²⁹. Indeed, the deity’s epithets *hnty t3-sty* “Foremost of

²¹ Allen 2001: 95.

²² In this case the deity is not explicitly evoked by name.

²³ Allen 2015: 31–32; Allen 2013: 116a.

²⁴ Gardiner 1957: 502.

²⁵ Creasman & Yamamoto 2019: 349.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, for the original text see Allen 2013: 864d.

²⁷ Adams 1927: 166.

²⁸ Wilkinson 2003: 105; El-Sayed 2011: 306–307.

²⁹ Allen 2015: 353.

Nubia”³⁰ and *pr(w) m t3-sty* “the one who comes forth from Nubia”³¹ associate him with this southern region, while his actions connected to incense³² describe him as a provider of *sntr*-incense for the deceased to conduct the rituals necessary for the efficient³³ burial. It is interesting to note that up to this day there are no known Pyramid Texts that associate Dedwen with other types of incense, for example, *ꜥndw* or *ꜥntyw*. The possible reason for this phenomenon will be explained below.

It is important to note that Nubia was not the only producer of *sntr*-incense. Thus, in the pyramid of Teti, the second King who ordered to carve the PT incantations on the ceiling of his burial apartments, two other types of *sntr*-incense are mentioned – the “*sntr*-incense from Nekheb” (El-Kab) and the “*sntr* from the Marshland” (Delta)³⁴. Despite that the passage is unfortunately unclear and damaged, it is possible to assume that *sntr* was also produced in (or imported through) Delta. Alternatively, it is possible to associate these two kinds of *sntr* with the traditional dichotomy of North (Buto, Delta, Lower Egypt) and South (Nekhen/Nekheb, Nile Valley, Upper Egypt), this extrapolating the sacral meaning of *sntr* on the whole Egypt. *sntr*-incense is also associated with El-Kab through its apparently white color³⁵, which is also the color of *hꜥ.t* – the White Crown of Nekhbet³⁶, the divine patron of Nekheb (El-Kab) and the titulary goddess of the Upper Egypt. In the later periods *sntr*-incense was also imported from Libya and Asia, especially Byblos³⁷.

Such a wide variety of the places from where the *sntr*-incense was imported naturally created a conundrum for scholars who tried to define the modern botanical equivalent for the plant which produced this substance. Today there are two major hypotheses on its identity. One was set forth by Steuer (1937) and supported by Baum (1994), while another was introduced by Loret (1949)³⁸. According to the Steuer, the word *sntr* was used by the Ancient Egyptians to denote olibanum, also known as the frankincense or “true incense”. This aromatic resin of “light yellowish-brown colour”³⁹ is produced by trees of genus *Boswellia*, which grow in the

³⁰ As, for example, in PT 572. Allen 2015: 231–232; Allen 2013: 1476b.

³¹ See PT 610. Allen 2015: 229; Allen 2013: 1710a–1723b.

³² Wilkinson 2003: 105. PT 610 mentions the divinity providing the deceased with *sntr*-incense, see Allen 2015: 229 and Allen 2013: 1718b.

³³ See the discussion on *sꜥh.w* below.

³⁴ Allen 2015: 330; Allen 2013: 22a.

³⁵ Baum 1994: 19.

³⁶ Wilkinson 2003: 213–215.

³⁷ Baum 1994: 19–20, footnote 18.

³⁸ Both theories are recapitulated in Baum 1994: 17. The article also provides the author’s own thoughts on the topic.

³⁹ See also Lucas 1948: 111–113.

mountainous regions of Southern Arabia, especially Dhofar mountains, and Somalia. Minor species of this genus also inhabit Eritrea, Sudan and Ethiopian Highlands⁴⁰. This kind of incense is one of the most important aromatics coming from the Southern Red Sea region, and Lucas reports its use by different populations for medicinal and other purposes from very early times⁴¹. However, there are some serious objections for identification of *sntr* with frankincense. For example, as was mentioned before, *sntr* could also be of Asian origin, notably from Lebanon, where the city of Byblos is situated. However, there is no evidence of any *Boswellia* species from that region.

According to the second theory which was set forth twelve years later by Loret, *sntr* was the resin of one (or possibly several) of the species of the *Pistacia* genus, notably by *P. Terebinthus*. *Pistacia* genus contains up to a dozen of species that are native to both Africa and the Near East, of which Baum mentions seven⁴² as being characteristic to the Near East, and the distribution area of the species covers all the places where, according to ancient Egyptian sources, *sntr* originated. This led Loret to think that the exact modern species equivalent of the Ancient Egyptian *sntr* tree was determined.

This theory, while attractive, has several important drawbacks. Firstly, as noted by Baum⁴³, it does not take into account the possibility of existence in the pharaonic times of a now extinct species of *Pistacia* genus, a product of which was named *sntr* by the Ancient Egyptians. Secondly, the *sntr* might have not been the same product during the whole pharaonic history. Indeed, the system of classification of plants which the scholars use today, and according to which different trees are united under one genus, be it *Pistacia*, *Boswellia* etc., is a modern concept developed in the 19th century⁴⁴. Ancient Egyptians very likely had a different approach. As was stated above, they possibly distinguished different trees and their aromatic products one from another, but their ability to do so probably rested on experience in product exchange and nature observations, and not on the scientific classification methods which are in use today. Hundreds of years of travels to the Southern Red Sea region and observations of trees bearing aromatics which grew there created certain mental maps⁴⁵ of the distribution of certain resinous substance called *sntr* with certain properties, characteristics and purpose. *sntr*

⁴⁰ Lucas 1937: 28.

⁴¹ Lucas 1948: 111.

⁴² Baum 1994: 20.





⁴³ Ibid., 22–23.

⁴⁴ Creasman & Yamamoto 2019: 348.

⁴⁵ On the concept of mental maps see Michaux-Colombot 2004: 353–355.

could, but did not have to, be produced of the trees of the same species in all periods. Thus, as Baum states, it is problematic to relate *sntr*-incense to the product of one particular tree species⁴⁶. Instead, an alternative solution can be found.

There is a somewhat similar concept in Ancient Egyptian religious literature, the comparison with which might be useful for the present discussion on *sntr*-incense. This concept is that of *s3h.w*⁴⁷. This term, with its literal meaning being “the one that makes *3h*”, is a general name for the Ancient Egyptian sacred mortuary texts, including the PT, the CT and in the later times the BD, the main purpose of which is to help the deceased person to achieve the blessed state of being *3h*. The texts have different composition, date of creation and even medium on which they are preserved, but they have the same broad characteristics, the same sphere of use and the same purpose. This term, being a rather wide one, might be compared with the term *sntr*, which, curiously enough, often served for the same purpose as *s3h.w* – to help the deceased to get a proper burial.

In contrast with *sntr*-incense, there are other types of aromatics that are mentioned by the Ancient Egyptians rather infrequently. One of them is  *s3st*-incense⁴⁸. It is a rather obscure substance, which is mentioned only several times throughout all the pharaonic history, namely in the inscription of Harkhuf⁴⁹ and in several other instances dating from the 4th to the 19th Dynasty⁵⁰. It was proved⁵¹ that the aromatic product  *h3syt* which is attested from the 12th Dynasty onwards and is associated with Punt is a later writing of the same substance. It is written in different inscriptions with several determinatives such as ◦ N33, ∞ M33,  W2 and  M3⁵², which when analysed in complex implies an oily substance of plant origin which is preserved in the form of dried-up grains. This led Edel to identify this product as “Harzkörner” – that is, dried-up tree resin. In pEbers this product is associated also with the country of *Md3*-people, inhabitants of the hilly desert country lying between the Middle Nile

⁴⁶ The problem is complicated by the fact that in the modern times varieties of some aromatics, for example of frankincense, are sometimes produced from the trees of different genera of species – *Boswellia* and *Commiphora*, see Lucas 1948: 112. This could undoubtedly have been the case in the pharaonic times as well.

⁴⁷ Hays 2009: 53–54.

⁴⁸ Cooper 2012: 5.




⁴⁹ See the reference in footnote 20.

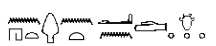
⁵⁰ See El-Sayed 2011: 241 and Edel 1984: 190.

⁵¹ Edel 1984: 189; El-Sayed 2011: 241.

⁵² See footnote 51.

valley and the Red Sea. This association might signify that these people played a role of intermediaries between Egypt and the countries to the south⁵³, where *šs3t /hs3yt* originated.

Another type of incense which is clearly associated with Punt is  *nd*. It has very few attestations throughout the pharaonic history. This fact, and the phonetic similarity of the name of the product to another type of incense,  *ntyw*, which will be discussed below, led the scholars to suppose that *nd* is an another spelling of *ntyw*, and not a different product. The hypothesis of equating *ntyw* and *nd* looked even more credible because of the similarity of the determinative  implying in this context three pellets of dry gum-resin⁵⁴, thus revealing the physical form in which these aromatics existed.

The main source of information about *nd*-incense are the reliefs discovered during the two archaeological seasons in 2002 – 2004 by the Egyptian mission in the pyramid complex of the 5th Dynasty King Sahure in Abusir. These reliefs were found on the blocks of limestone which formed the walls of the causeway leading from the valley temple lying close to the Nile valley vegetation to the mortuary temple adjacent to the pyramid⁵⁵. Two blocks are of the main interest, namely *SC/south/2003/06*⁵⁶ and *SC/south/2003/07*⁵⁷. On the former one the King, his family and courtiers are depicted in admiration of the small leafless tree, the branches of which is covered by “globular bead-like plums”⁵⁸. These objects of irregular globular shape were interpreted by the excavator as the tears of resin which were produced by the tree after cutting by an adze. This very process, which is typical way to gather aromatic resin from the gum-bearing trees, is depicted on the second slab as performed by the King himself⁵⁹. One of the trees is named as  *nh.t n.t nd* on the block *SC/south/2003/06* (see Fig.1). This tree was evidently brought from Punt by the expedition sent by Sahure to this southern country in the end of his reign. It is possible that this venture also is recorded on the Palermo Stone.⁶⁰ The tree was then evidently transplanted in the garden of the King in order to provide the royal court with its own reliable source of incense, which was actively used in rituals.

⁵³ This country might have been known to the Egyptians as *hs3y*, thus making *hs3yt* a nisba. However, El-Sayed (2011: 241) doubts this connection due to the fact that the toponym *hs3y* is attested from the 12th Dynasty onwards, while the product itself is known much earlier.

⁵⁴ El-Awady 2009: 256.

⁵⁵ For the description of the pyramid complex of Sahure in Abusir see Lehner 1997: 142–144.

⁵⁶ El-Awady 2009: Pl. 6.

⁵⁷ Ibid.: Pl. 5.

⁵⁸ Ibid.: 255.

⁵⁹ El-Awady 2006: 39.

⁶⁰ See Chapter 3, pp.34–37.

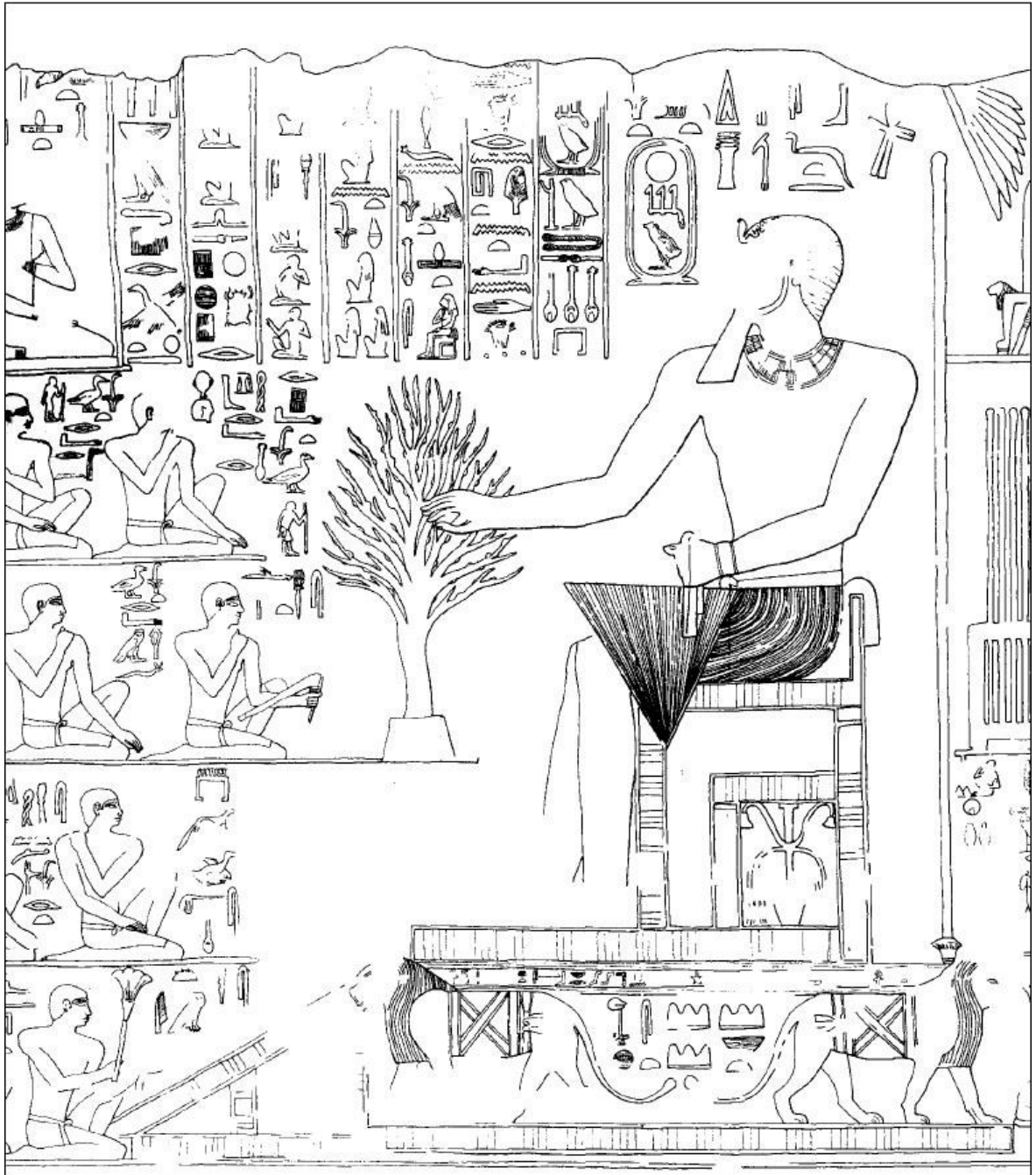


Fig. 1. King Sahure and his court admire the *ʿnd*-tree. From El-Awady 2009: Pl.6.


Tarek El-Awady (2009: 256) argues that the *ʿnd*-tree from Fig.1 is to be equated with frankincense tree⁶¹, that is, with one of the species of the genus *Boswellia*. In support of the theory he makes reference to the fact that the abovementioned globular beads on the relief preserve traces of yellowish-brown pigment. The fact that this color was used for them by the artists of Sahure might indeed equate these tears of resin with the hardened tears of

⁶¹ See also Creasman & Yamamoto 2019: 353.

frankincense⁶². The conclusion might as well be supported by very small number of mentions of *ꜥnd*-incense in the Pharaonic history. Indeed, El-Awady (2009: 254) cites only two mentions of this product apart from the reliefs of Sahure, the first from the reign of Djedkare Isesi from the 5th Dynasty and the second from the New Kingdom. Both of the sources belong to the private funerary sphere, for they are found in the tombs of high officials. Thus, they are not discussed in the present thesis. However, they are closely connected to the royal sphere. El-Awady claims that the small number of mentions of *ꜥnd* can be explained by the high prestige and exclusiveness of this substance, which was very rare and controlled exclusively by the King, who only rarely granted his servants access to it as a reward for their extraordinary service. Thus, Senedjemib Inty, the overseer of all works of the King Djedkare Isesi, while describing in his autobiography the favors bestowed on him by the King, states:

*“His Majesty had me anointed with ꜥnd”*⁶³.

In this passage important evidence is preserved on the state which the product had while being ready to use. The reliefs discussed above depict the raw material as lumps of resin which are exuded by the tree. Evidently, after collection the lumps as result of some processes were turned into an ointment. Unfortunately, we do not have any information on the nature of this processes.

Some parallels to this usage of raw aromatic resin are offered by another product which was already mentioned, namely, the  *ꜥntyw*-incense. This type of incense was the most praised product of Punt⁶⁴. Unlike *sntr*-incense, it was exclusively of foreign, Puntite origin, an “*aromatic substance par excellence*”⁶⁵. The earliest evidence of the product from Egypt is dated to the reign of Snefru, the first King of the 4th Dynasty. In the Lower temple lying near his Bent

⁶² Lucas 1948: 111 describes the lumps of frankincense as having this same color.

⁶³ Brovarski 2000: 90.

⁶⁴ Creasman & Yamamoto 2019: 350.

⁶⁵ Dixon 1969: 55. There is only one instance of *ꜥntyw* originating purportedly not from Punt, but from Retjenu, dating to the reign of Thutmose III from the 18th Dynasty. However, Dixon (1961: 181–182) states that this aromatic still could have been originating “from the Red Sea region”.

proposed to read this word as ζndw . This would mean that the Egyptians under Sahure brought to Egypt two main types of aromatics – $\zeta ntyw$ and more rare type, $\zeta nd(w)$.

There are different opinions on how to translate the term $\zeta ntyw$. According to El-Awady, who, as was mentioned earlier, identifies ζnd as frankincense, $\zeta ntyw$ should be translated as myrrh⁶⁹. Myrrh is an aromatic resin which is produced by the trees of the *Commiphora* genus⁷⁰, and it differs from frankincense, most notably, in the color of the lumps of dried resin. Myrrh lumps usually have more reddish color which can be compared to that of the heaps of $\zeta ntyw$ from the reliefs of Hatshepsut⁷¹, in contrast to more pale, yellowish-brown color used on the reliefs of Sahure. However, as El-Awady himself points out, the color argument is not decisive⁷². Edel, on the other hand, understands $\zeta ntyw$ as “das wohlriechende Olibanum”⁷³, and adds, that it might have been produced by the tree of one of *Boswellia* species, without adding much argumentation. Steuer considered $\zeta ntyw$ to be a “particular type of myrrh”. His main argument is connected to the fact that $\zeta ntyw$ was a raw product for a fragrant ointment known as *mdt*, which he identified as a pharaonic name for an ointment called *stacte*. He argues that the latter was somehow extracted from the former⁷⁴. This might imply a process analogous to the abovementioned transformation of and from lumps of resin to the ointment from the autobiography of Senedjemib Inty. Lucas, in his turn, wonders, if $\zeta ntyw$ could not sometimes be applied to both frankincense and myrrh⁷⁵. Unfortunately, in the present state of knowledge the decisive argument in this discussion is still lacking.

Any discussion on the main types of incense from the Egyptian sources will remain incomplete without a recapitulation of main uses of these commodities in Egypt. The word “incense” comes from the Latin verb “*incendere*”, which literally means “*to burn*”⁷⁶. This perfectly demonstrate the main function of these aromatics in Egypt, as they were used primarily to create a perfumed smoke through burning, and thus cense and cleanse an

⁶⁹ Creasman & Yamamoto 2019: 353 agree with this identification.

⁷⁰ Lucas 1948: 113–114.

⁷¹ See Naville 1898: Pl. LXXIX.

⁷² El-Awady 2009: 256, footnote 1432.

⁷³ Edel 1996: 203.

⁷⁴ Steuer 1943: 280–281.

⁷⁵ Lucas 1937: 28.

⁷⁶ Lucas 1948: 110.

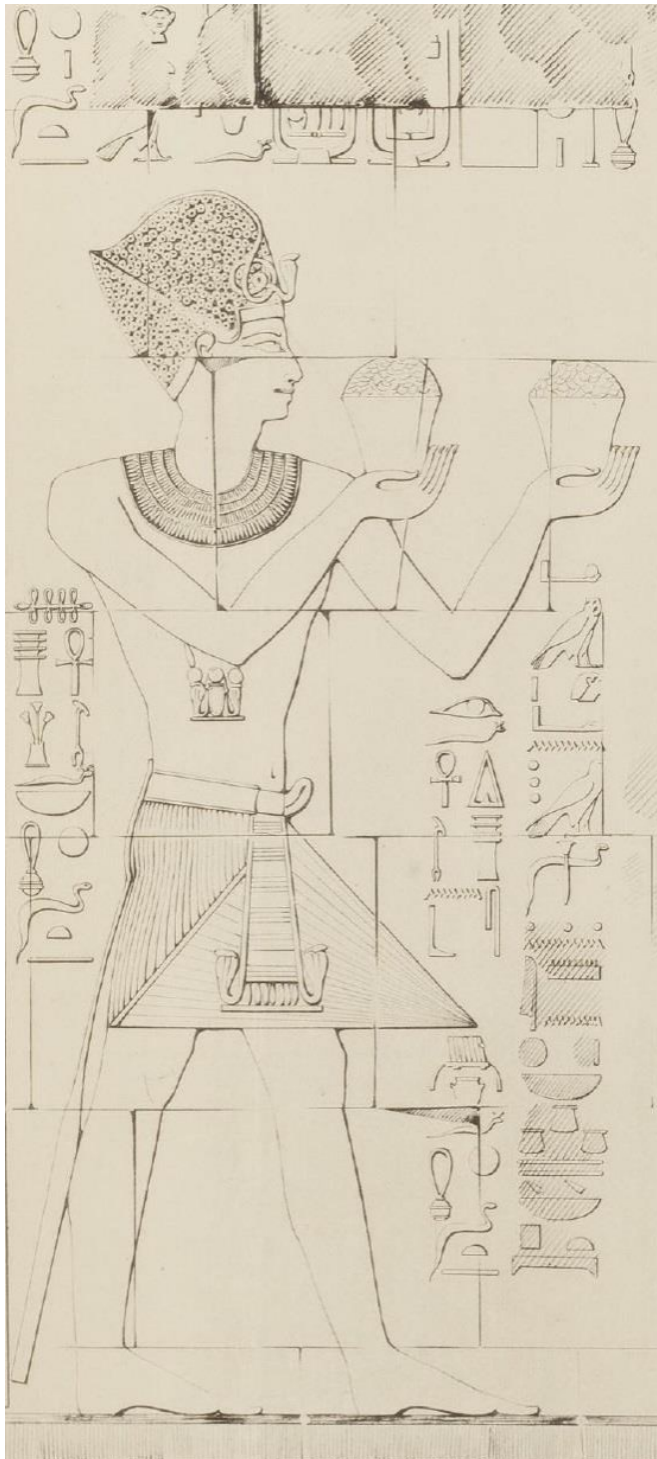


Fig. 3. King Thutmose III offers *ḥntyw*-incense in cups to the sacred bark of Amun. Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari. From Naville 1898: Pl. 82.

environment or person and make it suitable for (conducting) various rituals. A good example for this function of incense is provided by PT 610, where the gods are censed with *sntr*-incense⁷⁷. Ritual censng played an important role in the Egyptian rituals⁷⁸, especially in mortuary ones, from the very early period on. Throughout all Egypt hundreds of censers of various forms and shapes were found, dating to Predynastic and Early Dynastic times⁷⁹. Many similar objects were also found in Lower Nubia⁸⁰, which implies the wide geographic spread of censng rituals, but may also signify their non-Egyptian origin⁸¹. Dried lumps or pellets of aromatic resinous substances were heated on the burner to produce a pleasant smoke. According to Willems, some substances in more liquid state were applied on the balls made of costly stones, that played the role of the solid core, and then put on the burner⁸². In the Pyramid Texts the deceased King “goes up on the smoke of a great censng” to the sky⁸³. In the Offering Ritual incense was closely connected with natron, which was one of the main products connected to the mortuary sphere⁸⁴. In the later periods

⁷⁷ Allen 2015: 229; Allen 2013: 1718b.

⁷⁸ Creasman & Yamamoto 2019: 354.

⁷⁹ The useful work of reference on the Predynastic incense burners is Podzorski 2003.

⁸⁰ Williams 1977: 2–3.

⁸¹ For this opinion see for example Creasman & Yamamoto 2019: 348, 354.

⁸² Willems 2012: 97.

⁸³ PT 267, see Allen 2015: 52; Allen 2013: 365b.

⁸⁴ PT 32, see Allen 2015: 21, 330; Allen 2013: 22a.

aromatic substances were sometimes used for mummification⁸⁵.

The use of incense was not limited to the funerary sphere. In general sense, the fragrant aroma of different types of incense was an indication of divine presence. This is the reason behind another possible explanation of the term “*sntr*” in addition to those already mentioned above – as *sn ntr*, “the god’s smell”⁸⁶. The ointment *mdt* which was obtained by processing raw *ꜥntyw* was applied to the images of gods in temples to “revivify” them every morning. In the New Kingdom the fragrance coming from various aromatics, especially *ꜥntyw* from Punt, was believed to belong exclusively to divinities, and was considered unattainable to earthly beings. Only King could obtain and use them, thus confirming his divine status and legitimacy. Incense burning, as well as incense itself, was among the best offerings presented to gods (see Fig.3). The importance of incense as a carrier of the royal favor to non-royal persons was already discussed above. Thus, incense became the important product of prestige. It was also used for medical purposes⁸⁷. For example, pEbers recommends to use several types of *ꜥntyw*, such as *ꜥntyw šw*, *ꜥntyw w3d* and *ꜥntyw ndm*, in different recipes⁸⁸.

To sum up, various types of incense were very important commodities for the Ancient Egyptians, and had many uses in different areas of their life. Several types of aromatics, especially *ꜥntyw*, as well as some other known under different names were the most important product of Punt. Their appearance in the Ancient Egyptian sources can reveal the hitherto unknown interconnection of the country with the Land of Punt. Numerous benefits of obtaining and owning them made the journeys to their distant places of origin in the South very rewarding.

⁸⁵ Rageot et al. 2023: 4–6.

⁸⁶ Creasman & Yamamoto 2019: 355.

⁸⁷ For many different applications of *sntr*-incense in the medical sphere see Baum 1994: 26ff.

⁸⁸ Steuer 1943: 284, footnote 22.

2. Interconnections during the early Old Kingdom (4th Dynasty)

2.1. Reign of Snefru. “Lower temple” in Dahshur

The history of Egyptian contacts with the Land of Punt is rich and lengthy, spanning for several Millenia from the Old Kingdom till the Late Period. It can be studied through a number of different sources. Typologically, there are three major groups are discernible: archaeological sources, textual sources and iconographic sources. Each of the types present its own advantages and disadvantages, which often help the scholars to extract the valuable information necessary to reconstruct historic events. It is important to note that one source can sometimes be assigned to more than one principal group of sources, *e.g.*, the image (iconographic source) can be accompanied by the textual explanation (textual source). For clarity, in the situations like the one described above the source will be classified according to the medium which gives more information on the Egypt – Punt interconnection, thus being more useful as a source. For example, a relief with a short explaining caption will be considered an iconographic source, while a text on the tomb wall will be enlisted as a textual source. In the next two chapters the sources on the Egypt – Punt interconnections dating to the Old Kingdom are discussed in the chronological sequence, from the earliest source dating to the reign of Snefru up to the late 6th Dynasty. For the source relevance criteria, see Introduction, p. 4.

Unfortunately, the precise date and circumstances of the first contacts of the ancient Egyptians with Punt in dynastic times are unknown. In the present state of knowledge, it is impossible to define exactly, which King was the first to dispatch an expedition to bring much-praised incense and other valuable commodities to the royal residence. Such an extraordinary event would certainly be considered important enough to be mentioned in annals or royal inscriptions, as was the case with Palermo stone⁸⁹ of the late 5th Dynasty. However, for the earlier part of the Old Kingdom and all the more so for the Early Dynastic era, the comparable sources are lacking. This led to incorrect assumption that the ancient Egyptians started to maintain contacts with Punt only relatively late in the Old Kingdom.

Several important discoveries both in the Nile Valley and the Red Sea coast which took place in the recent decades challenged this view. In the case of one of these finds, the lack of textual sources in this early period was compensated by the iconographic source, which proved to be crucial for the Egyptologists. This source, which is by far the earliest evidence of Egypt – Punt interconnections was discovered in the so-called “Lower temple”, which is the part of

⁸⁹ See the discussion about the Palermo stone on pp. 36–37 and Fig.7.

the Bent pyramid complex, situated in Dahshur South⁹⁰. This structure was built in the second half of Snefru's reign⁹¹, at the time when the major construction works moved to the Red Pyramid in Dahshur North. It is a precursor of a mortuary temple, which would later become an integral part in all the later royal pyramid complexes built in a "traditional" way. Before describing the source, it is necessary to introduce an earlier phase of the "Lower temple", which might help to better evaluate the source and make some historical parallels further below.

The temple stood in the wadi to the northeast from the northeastern corner of the Bent pyramid. It seems originally to be a place where Snefru and his court made official celebrations, or a royal rest house⁹². In the first phase of its existence, the temple was a rectangular building with several rooms and a columned hall, surrounded by the massive enclosure wall. It was erected entirely of mudbrick, which might point at its non-permanent character⁹³, possibly, at least partly functionally disconnected from the nearby pyramid complex, which was entirely made of stone. This difference of building material made Ahmed Fakhry, who first excavated the site, to date the mudbrick building to the Middle Kingdom.

The building was often rebuilt, and additional rooms were added. The focal point of the building was a large garden, where trees were planted and supported by irrigation channels. Hundreds of pits for trees were discovered, as well as places for shrubs, bushes and smaller vegetation, such as flowers. Unfortunately, the organic material is very poor. Only in roots of palm trees were recovered, as well as remains of some bushes. These remains do not allow to reconstruct precisely if the garden consisted of palms only, or several species were present⁹⁴. The excavators date this earlier mudbrick building to the middle of the reign of Snefru, around the year of the 8th counting of cattle, with probably only 15 years of use, before the next construction phase begun.

Around the 15th counting of cattle a major reconstruction took place on the wadi site. The southern part of the garden was razed, and a new building was constructed of fine limestone from Tura. It was connected with the areal of the pyramid and with quays in the Nile valley by a causeway built of the same material. The new building was rectangular and was oriented after the north-south axis. The entrance in the southern wall was followed by a corridor flanked by two sets of storerooms. The corridor was leading northward, to the open court, the northern part of which had a portico with two rows of rectangular pillars. The pillars were decorated with

⁹⁰ Lehner 1997: 103–104; Seidlmayer 2021: 135–136; Tallet – Lehner 2021: 99–102.

⁹¹ The concise information on the reign of this King can be found in Bárta 2017: 282–284 and Scalf 2009.

⁹² Tallet – Lehner 2021: 99.

⁹³ Alexanian – Aldred 2014, 8.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 7. See also Tallet – Lehner 2021: 100–101.

reliefs, fragments of which were discovered published by Ahmed Fakhry⁹⁵. The reexamination of the pillars in 1996 by Elmar Edel brought to light an important source which significantly altered estimations for the earliest possible date of the Egyptian interactions with the Land of Punt.

One of the pillars, namely, the pillar C, has a unique relief on it (see **Source №1** in Annex 1)⁹⁶. Its preservation might be best characterized as fragmentary. However, on these fragments it is still possible to see the posture of the King wearing the “Nubian” wig, uraeus and a ceremonial crown adorned with two tall falcon feathers and a set of horns of a ram and cow, which Fakhry for some reason defines as “*atef*”⁹⁷. The King is holding a staff in his right hand. Above him three of his royal names are situated – the praenomen, Horus name in the *serekh* and a Golden Horus name, from left to right. To the left of the King, directly under the royal cartouche, a vertical inscription runs from top to bottom:

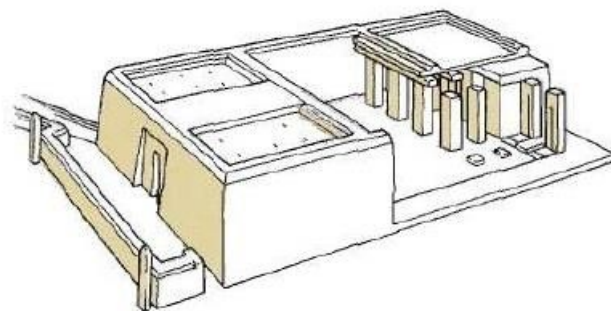


Fig. 4. Limestone “Lower temple” of Snefru in Dahshur. From Lehner 1997: 104.

m33 ird 38 w3d ʕntyw w3d

which can be translated as “[Snefru] observes growing of fresh cypress and fresh ʕntyw-tree”. The lower part of this side of the pillar, including the legs of the King, is lost. However, Edel (1996: 201ff) considered it possible to add to the scene in this place another two relief fragments depicting the tree with fresh leaves, which Fakhry labelled as unique for the Old Kingdom, naming as the closest parallels the trees from the “temple of Abusir”⁹⁸. In fact, the evidence of the fragments combined together is the first attestation of the ʕntyw trees in ancient Egypt⁹⁹. As was mentioned before, ʕntyw was among the most important products of Punt, it was closely associated with this region. Sources associating it with regions other than Punt are not attested. The occurrence of this foreign tree on the relief of Snefru opens two possibilities. First one would imply that in the earlier part of the reign of Snefru, no later than the construction of a limestone “Lower temple” began, during the reign of Snefru an expedition was dispatched to Punt, which returned successfully and brought fresh ʕntyw-trees, which were later transplanted

⁹⁵ Fakhry 1961.

⁹⁶ The relief was already mentioned above in the discussion on ʕntyw, see Fig. 2, and also Fakhry 1961: 80.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Fakhry 1961: 165, fig. 275.

⁹⁹ Diego Espinel 2017.

in the temple, as was the case in later reigns of Sahure (see below) or Queen Hatshepsut in the New Kingdom. Another possibility is that the tree was cultivated in Dahshur from seeds. In any case, both possibilities imply that the Egyptian court had a contact, direct or through some intermediaries, with the lands where the *ḥntyw*-trees grew in natural condition. The context in which the fragmented relief was found, can add some details to the importance of the plant to the ancient Egyptians. The tree was considered significant enough for being depicted in the scene with the King observing it growing. This scene can be compared to the later depictions of King Sahure and his court observing the *ḥnd*-tree (see Fig. 1 and below). Indeed, it is possible that this 5th Dynasty King found inspiration for reliefs of his own mortuary temple and causeway in Abusir in the decorative program of his honored predecessor¹⁰⁰. One can also hypothesize that the relief with *ḥntyw*-trees depicts an actual event that took place at the site earlier, when the mudbrick building was functioning. As was mentioned above, the main feature of the site during this earlier phase was a large garden. It is possible that the *ḥntyw*-trees were planted there and attended by the King during an official ceremony. One can even assume that the “Lower temple” with its garden planted artificially out of the Nile valley vegetation zone, which does not have parallels in the earlier royal architecture, was originally fashioned primarily for the exotic *ḥntyw*-trees. This would create a unique cultic environment in Dahshur for the mortuary complex of the King who dispatched a successful expedition to Punt, as *ḥntyw* from Punt had very important religious connotations. Unfortunately, in the modern state of knowledge this hypothesis of the connection between the *ḥntyw*-trees and the earliest phase of the “Lower temple” cannot be proved, since no archaeological remains of the possible *ḥntyw*-trees were found *in situ* in tree pits. This is also the reason why the source was classified as iconographic one (see Source №1 in Annex 1). However, the relief is still an important witness of (one of) the earliest Egypt – Punt interconnections.

Besides the relief in the “Lower Temple”, there is other indirect evidence suggesting that some contacts with Punt took place already in the reign of Snefru¹⁰¹. In fact, there is a possibility that the earliest use of the Red Sea port on the far desert periphery of the ancient Egyptian state, in Wadi al-Jarf, where plausible archaeological evidence of Egypt’s interaction with Punt has been found, must be dated to the reign of this King (see below).

¹⁰⁰ Gospodar 2019: 50.

¹⁰¹ Diego Espinel 2017.

2.2. Reign of Khufu. Wadi al-Jarf/Ras-Budran system and development of the seagoing expeditions

Throughout all the pharaonic history the Eastern, or Arabian, desert which separated the fertile Nile valley from the Red Sea, was considered a periphery of the state, its borderland. It was indeed a natural border which was very hard to cross, but it was not impenetrable. In fact, from the Predynastic times on, many desert wadis, although dry and rocky, were used as important highways¹⁰². Their rocky walls are covered with hundreds of inscriptions down to the end of the pharaonic times and beyond. The wadis opened a way from the Nile valley to an important destination – the Red Sea.

The inhabitants of the Nile valley had great interests connected with the Red Sea. It was a source of important exotica such as sea shells¹⁰³. However, not only the sea itself attracted the ancient Egyptians. Certain importance bore the lands that laid behind. As early as in the 1st Dynasty, the ancient Egyptian King Den campaigned in the Sinai Peninsula, which is separated from the Eastern desert by a narrow Gulf of Suez¹⁰⁴. The main enemy against whom the expedition was despatched were the desert-dwelling nomads known as *iwntiu*. These activities were commemorated on the series of bas-reliefs in the Wadi el-Humur in Central Sinai, where Den is depicted in the traditional smiting position. Probably the same event is mentioned in the Palermo Stone¹⁰⁵. Although the precise route of the King's force remains unknown¹⁰⁶, it is clear that the expedition leaders should have known the ways to reach the Red Sea shore and were confident enough to cross the desert with a big body of men. Den's successors, especially Semerkhet, were also active in the desert area from the Wadi Araba in the South to the Wadi Tumilat in the North. However, the complete dominance of the Egyptians over this area seems to have been achieved under the King Snefru, who was later worshiped as a local deity there and in Wadi Maghara in the Sinai¹⁰⁷.

Simultaneously with the military exploration of this area, the first mining operations in the Sinai took place. The region was famous for its deposits of turquoise and especially copper. This metal was essential for the large-scale building projects, one of which was the above-

¹⁰² See for example Gasse 2012: 134.

¹⁰³ For Egyptian trade of sea shells, see Mumford 2012 and Mumford 2020. For an important find of a Red Sea shell in Predynastic context see Ciałowicz 2012: 175–176.

¹⁰⁴ Tallet 2010.

¹⁰⁵ Wilkinson 2000: 106.

¹⁰⁶ According to Pierre Tallet (2010: 103), the expeditionary force could either bypass the Gulf of Suez to the North of it, or choose a maritime route via Ayn Soukhna. The scholar characterizes the latter possibility as highly probable.

¹⁰⁷ Kees 1961: 117.

mentioned Bent Pyramid in Dahshur. Sinai was visited by the mining expeditions on the regular basis at least from the reign of Snefru, since the mines in Wadi Maghara were known later in the Egyptian sources as the Mine of Snefru. The extensive mining under this King implies that the Egyptians should have started this process earlier, to reach a certain level of experience to conduct large-scale operations. Indeed, there is some evidence that earlier mining activities could have taken place in Gebel Umm Bogma region¹⁰⁸. Unfortunately, the natural landscape there is almost completely destroyed by extensive mining of manganese in the modern times, thus all the possible archaeological evidence of ancient copper mining is lost forever.

Copper was an essential resource for the large pyramid building projects. Stone workers and quarrymen used immense volume of copper for their tools, and the King had to establish uninterrupted and long-term supply of the material for the building sites in the Memphite necropolis. This explains Snefru's increased interest in the mines of Southern Sinai¹⁰⁹. However, the land route from Sinai to the Memphite region, leading north from the Gulf of Suez, proved difficult to use by heavily laden caravans¹¹⁰. That's why an alternative way to transport copper by sea was invented. This solution saved for the Egyptians many days of hard travel through the desert to the North of the Gulf of Suez and created the site of Wadi el-Jarf – probably the earliest maritime port in history.

Wadi el-Jarf archaeological site is situated on the Red Sea coast ca. 120 km to the South of the city of Suez, in the vicinity of the modern resort town of Zafarana¹¹¹. It is the earliest of the so-called ancient Egyptian “intermittent ports”¹¹² on the Red Sea, the other known two are Ayn Soukhna (see below) and Mersa Gawasis. The term “intermittent ports” implies that these sites were not permanently settled, as was the case, for example, of the much later Red Sea port of Berenike, but were used rather irregularly for only a part of the year, usually in the late spring or summer¹¹³, by expeditions dispatched to obtain various raw materials for the royal court. These sites were supplied from the Nile Valley due to aridity of their environment. However, some crafts, such as pottery, were still performed on the place, as will be shown below.

¹⁰⁸ Tallet – Lehner 2021: 71.

¹⁰⁹ Tallet – Marouard – Laisney 2012: 425–426.

¹¹⁰ Although in the Predynastic times and the Old Kingdom the copper ore was smelted close to the mining sites, see Tallet – Lehner 2021: 74–77, the amount of the metal extracted still would be immense.

¹¹¹ Tallet – Lehner 2021: 53.

¹¹² Tallet 2015:

¹¹³ Claire Somaglino in “Ayn Soukhna – an intermittent harbour in the Red Sea pharaonic network”, at “Under the Water” Webinar Series by Nautical Archaeology Society, available online on

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1iOWZRYkKK4>

Wadi el Jarf is situated at the place where a mouth of a desert wadi which bears the same name adjoins a sandy and rocky plain which separates the Red Sea and South Galala heights. The place lies on the eastern end of a bigger wadi known as Wadi Araba, which separates North Galala and South Galala plateaus. An important source of water, a spring of a nearby monastery of St. Paul, makes the site even more convenient. Moreover, the location for the port was not chosen randomly, for Wadi Araba is a highway leading from the Nile Valley to the Red Sea. This made the port relatively easily reachable from the Nile Valley, more precisely – from the vicinity of Meidum¹¹⁴, the very site that was chosen by Snefru for his first pyramid complex. There the pyramid town of Djed-Snefru was also situated, which was an important administrative centre. This might indicate that Wadi el-Jarf site was founded already during the reign of Snefru. On the opposite shore of the Suez gulf, still within sight of the port at Wadi el-Jarf, lies the site of El-Markha, or Tell Ras-Budran¹¹⁵.

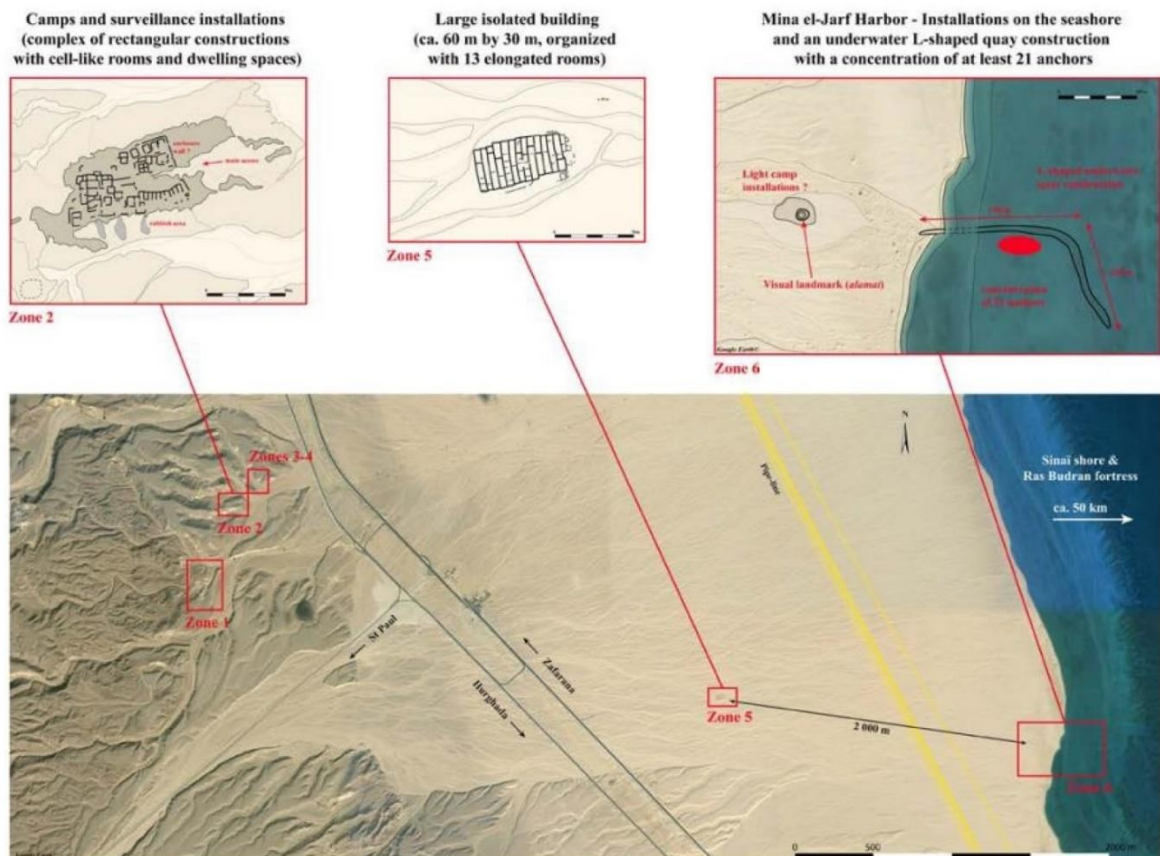


Fig. 5. Archaeological site of Wadi el-Jarf and its zones stretching out from the cliffs to the sea shore. From Tallet – Marouard 2012: 40.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.: 88.

¹¹⁵ Tallet – Marouard 2016: 168–172.

This small round fortress, apparently of the same date¹¹⁶, is almost certainly connected to Wadi el-Jarf, forming a part of a bigger infrastructure designed to provide the large pyramid building sites in the Memphite necropolis with large amounts of copper from Sinai.

However, the majority of finds on the site of Wadi el-Jarf allow to date it to the reign of Snefru's son and successor Khufu, or Khnemkhufu. This King is best known for constructing the Great pyramid in Giza, which is one the most important achievements of Old Kingdom architects. He might have spent his youth in Menat-Khufu¹¹⁷, the town in the vicinity of the modern city of Minya in Middle Egypt. This town lies in close proximity to the necropolis of Beni Hasan. Later in the Middle Kingdom the local noblemen buried there were often bearing the title "Overseer of the Eastern Desert", which reflected their close ties with Eastern Desert and tracks leading from the Nile to the Red Sea¹¹⁸. These ties should have probably existed in the Old Kingdom as well, since the local elites in every era continued to interact with the same desert landscape. It is possible that having become King, Khufu used the experience of the Middle Egyptian locals for the benefit of his desert and Red Sea enterprises.

The site was discovered in 1823 by the British Egyptologist and traveler Sir John Gardner Wilkinson (1797–1875), and then rediscovered more than one hundred years later, when in 1954 it was scientifically examined for the first time by two French scholars. However, their research was far from being comprehensive, so in beginning of the 21st century new excavations were started by the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale under direction of the famous archaeologist Pierre Tallet.

According to its main features, Wadi el-Jarf was divided by the excavator into six main zones grouped in four clusters. The westernmost cluster is situated in the elevated rocky area close to the entrance of the wadi. It consists of the so-called "sector of galleries" in Zone 1 and the "sector of camps" comprising Zones 2 – 4. The numeration of zones here proceeds from the South to the North (see fig.5).

Zone 1's main feature are thirty-one galleries cut in limestone cliffs at the edge of Galala South plateau, ca. 5 km far from the sea shore¹¹⁹. The presence of these galleries led John

¹¹⁶ For the discussion on the date of the fortress, see Mumford 2012 and Tallet – Marouard 2016: 136, 170 and footnotes.

¹¹⁷ Unfortunately, there is not much evidence of Khufu's early years. The hypothesis that the future King spent his youth in Menat-Khufu is based mainly on the toponym itself, which means "Nurse of Khufu". For a short summary on the site see Kessler 1982.

¹¹⁸ Kees 1961: 119–120.

¹¹⁹ For a detailed plan of Zone 1 see Tallet – Marouard – Laisney 2012: 429.

Gardner Wilkinson to believe that Wadi el-Jarf was a Greco-Roman necropolis with underground catacombs used for burials¹²⁰. This proved to be far from reality. The galleries of Wadi el-Jarf are very similar to those of the two other intermittent ports mentioned above, since the galleries were a characteristic feature of every such site. Egyptians needed a lot of protected space to store the equipment, supplies brought from the Nile Valley, and the raw materials obtained during the expedition. Instead of spending resources on construction of the storages, they cut galleries in the local rock. Another advantage of the galleries was their secureness, for they could be easily closed using the stone portcullises.

The galleries are clustered in two groups. Western group, including galleries G1 – G17, is hewn in a moon-shaped limestone rocky outcrop, entrances of different galleries being orientated to all four cardinal directions. The galleries are uniform in length, varying from 16.5 to 18.2 metres long, or rarely twice this long, ca. 34 metres¹²¹. They are also similar in height, measuring from 3 to 3.5 metres high. They have rectangular shape, vertical walls and flat roof. Galleries G1 and G15, in fact, consist of two connected galleries, entrance of one being located inside another. They were labelled as G1a-b and G15a-b. Walls of the galleries are covered from inside with brown clay mortar, remnants of which are preserved in several places. This layer protected the walls and stored cargo from moisture by eliminating the fissures in the rock. The mortar fortunately preserved several marks on it, which commemorate passing of expeditions via the site¹²². As another protective measure against moisture, the workers constructed inside several galleries¹²³ low transverse walls serving as benches, evidently to avoid the storage of wooden planks on the floor. Such uniformity in gallery dimensions suggests that all the galleries were planned as one project and were probably executed simultaneously. A stone-cut ramp to the east of the galleries facilitated access to the elevated rocky outcrop from the plain. The rest of the galleries, G19 to G28a-b, are situated to the southeast ca. 100 metres from the outcrop. The dimensions of these galleries are very close to those already mentioned. They are hewn in a limestone rock side of the wadi stretching north-south, their entrances being orientated westwards. Only exception is G20, the entrance of which faces eastwards due to the rock formation. Entrances of some of the galleries were equipped with a closing system with wooden rails, on which the closing blocks were sliding. When the gallery was opened during the phases of active use, the rails could serve as parts of ramps facilitating

¹²⁰ Tallet – Lehner 2021: 53–54.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*: 404.

¹²² Tallet – Lehner 2021: 137; Tallet – Marouard – Laisney 2012: 414–421.

¹²³ Tallet – Lehner 2021: 59.

entrance. The overall plan of the galleries demonstrates that workers successfully used the natural landscape without altering it significantly to create a protected environment for their cargo.

The archaeologists from IFAO cleared several galleries during consecutive excavation seasons and recovered abundant archaeological and epigraphic material. The floor of the galleries G2, G3, G4, G5, G22 and G23 proved to be very rich in remains and debris of various types, testifying a very active occupation of the galleries. These remains included numerous pieces of fabric, cattle bones, inscribed fragments of papyrus, wooden chips and instruments, copper instruments, fragments of ropes, some of which were covered with a dark substance, possibly resin or bitumen¹²⁴, and many ceramic shards. The broken pieces of ceramic vessels were forming large deposits inside and near the entrances of the galleries, and could be dated exclusively to the 4th Dynasty. Among the pottery types attested on the site there are small jugs, rough bowls for food preparation and open tableware with carinated rims, which belong to the type known as “Meidum Bowls”¹²⁵. Also, wide trays, bread-molds of a “bedja” type, and storage vessels were attested¹²⁶. It is important to note, that most of the pottery of the latter type was manufactured on the site from the local clay, which seems to be the unique occasion. Fragments of pottery made in the Nile Valley were also present, however, in lesser quantity. Pottery kilns necessary for the local pottery manufacture were found in Zone 1 between the two groups of galleries, while remains of potter’s tables were discovered in gallery G4¹²⁷. Big assemblages consisting of hundreds of storage jars, most of which appear to have been made in the aforementioned kilns, were found in galleries G15a-b, G22 and G23¹²⁸. Some of the largest vessels, although in fragmentary state, still could be found *in situ*, evidently on their original place inside the galleries. Many shards were found carrying inscriptions in red ink, mentioning the year counts of the reign of Khufu and the names of the teams of the workers operating on the site¹²⁹. Among the parallels to the pottery types from Wadi el-Jarf, according to the excavators, are the early Old Kingdom specimens from Upper Egypt, Buto, and different parts of the Memphite necropolis, including Giza, Abu-Rawash and most importantly, Dahshur¹³⁰. All of the above implies that during the early 4th Dynasty a pottery workshop was functioning

¹²⁴ Tallet – Marouard – Laisney 2012: 405; Tallet – Lehner 2021: 136.

¹²⁵ Tallet – Marouard 2016: 164, №7 and 165, №16.

¹²⁶ For the catalogue of the pottery types attested in Wadi el-Jarf see Tallet – Marouard 2016: 164–167.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*: 158.

¹²⁸ Tallet – Lehner 2021: 138–140.

¹²⁹ Tallet – Marouard 2016: 159–160; Tallet – Lehner 2021: 142.

¹³⁰ In Dahshur pottery kilns similar to those of Wadi el-Jarf were also discovered, see Tallet – Marouard 2016: 174–175.

on the site, where potters were creating vessels with the equipment brought from the Nile valley. This workshop made Wadi el-Jarf less dependent from supplies of pottery from the Nile Valley production centers. The short period of use of Wadi el-Jarf site presents a unique opportunity to conduct 4th Dynasty pottery studies.


A lot of useful information was obtained from the analysis of the papyrus fragments found in Wadi el-Jarf. The main cache of papyri was found 5 metres from the entrance of gallery G2 during spring season 2013. Other documents, as well as many separate fragments, were found in the area in front of the entries of the galleries G1 and G2. The papyri are dating to the reign of Khufu, which was proved by occurrences of his name in the administrative records. Among the documents recovered on the papyri were several logbooks, reports on the supplies of food and copper tools to the workers, account book dating to what has to be the year 26 of the reign of Khufu, and miscellaneous fragments. Due to the fact that the present thesis is not focusing on the administrative practices from the reign of Khufu, these fragments, otherwise of primary importance, will not be further described here. Unfortunately, they do not present any evidence of the Egypt – Punt interconnections¹³¹.

The most valuable archaeological finds from the point of view of the Egypt – Punt interconnections are the numerous wooden fragments found on the site during several excavation seasons. The pieces of timber were found concentrated at the entrances of several galleries. Especially, the biggest cache gallery G4 contained an accumulation of more than 50 large fragments of wood scattered on the floor near the gallery's entrance. In all, from this gallery alone more than 250 big and small wooden objects were recovered¹³². Many of them belonged to ancient ships, including hull details, tenons and pegs. Other were pieces of furniture or cargo, namely fragments of boxes, crates or chests. Wooden instruments were also found. These fragments were made of different shapes of wood, such as thuja, acacia tamarisk and cedar, which had to be imported to Egypt from the Levant. They significantly broadened our knowledge of the Egyptian shipbuilding during the 4th Dynasty.

However, the possible evidence of the Egypt – Punt interconnections (see **Source №2** in Annex 1) was presented not by the ship details, for the ships could well have been used only to the journeys to Sinai, but by the discovery in the several galleries of pieces of ebony. This very hard timber of dark color is systematically associated with Punt and Nubia in the Egyptian

¹³¹ See Tallet – Lehner 2021: 142–175 and Tallet 2017a for the complete report and publication of the Wadi el-Jarf papyri. More publications are in preparation.

¹³² Tallet – Marouard – Laisney 2012: 405.

inscriptions¹³³. The earliest of such inscriptions is the already mentioned text of Harkhuf, where ebony as *hbny*  is said to have been from the land of Yam. Ebony found in Wadi el-Jarf could hardly have been intended as a material for shipbuilding or as for cargo containers, as it was too precious and unsuitable for these purposes due to its natural properties. Thus, the presence of this type of timber in Wadi el-Jarf galleries can possibly be an indication of the trade interconnections between Wadi el-Jarf and the southern Red Sea region in the reign of Khufu, during which the timber arrived in Wadi el-Jarf as a valuable cargo. This hypothesis gains some weight in light of the aforementioned discoveries in Dahshur from the reign of Khufu's predecessor. The excavators themselves point out that such a trade contact with the Bab el-Mandeb region in that era is not beyond the realms of possibility¹³⁴. The close connection of the site of Wadi el-Jarf with royal expeditions and numerous associations of ebony with Punt make these finds an important source for the present thesis. Unfortunately, neither an exhaustive report nor a separate study on the ebony fragments from Wadi al-Jarf has yet been published. This makes it difficult to fully comprehend the significance of the find for the history of the Egypt – Punt interconnections and leaves several crucial questions unanswered.

There is a possibility to explain the presence of ebony in Wadi el-Jarf without implying contacts between Wadi el-Jarf and the southern Red Sea region. The precious wood could have been acquired by the members of the mining expeditions in Sinai through the exchange with the local nomadic population, who in their turn could be intermediaries in the timber trade. In this case the origin of this timber could have been Yemen¹³⁵, where one of the species of ebony, *Diospyros mespiliformis*, which is also known as the West African ebony, or Zanzibar ebony, is found in the wild. This tree can also be found in East Africa, the Sahel from Senegal to Sudan, Angola and Tanzania¹³⁶. However, most of the specimens of ebony found in Egypt are believed to come from another tree species – *Dalbergia melanoxylon*¹³⁷, known also as African ebony or African Blackwood. This tree's natural habitat is similar to *D.mespiliformis*, including Ethiopia, Sahel as far west as northern Nigeria and Senegal, Sudan and Mozambique, but it is

¹³³ Dixon 1961: 27.

¹³⁴ Tallet – Lehner 2021: 64–65

¹³⁵ A similar idea is discussed in Dixon 1961: 181–182. It is worth noting here that in the New Kingdom ebony was among the products of enigmatic people called *Gnbtjw*, who brought their tribute to Thutmose III in his regnal year 31–32. They are sometimes equated with the early inhabitants of the Southern Arabian country of Qataban lying in modern central Yemen, see Saleh 1972.

¹³⁶ Dixon 1961: 82.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*: 81.

not found in Yemen¹³⁸. The chemical and microscopic analysis of ebony fragments from Wadi el-Jarf could define the tree species and potentially indicate its place of origin, thus confirming or disproving this theory. In this connexion it is important to note that a fragment of another ebony tree species originating as far as Southern India, *Diospyros ebenum*, was found in the 5th Dynasty context in Abusir¹³⁹. Unfortunately, in this case the species identification remains doubtful¹⁴⁰, which emphasizes the importance of a precise analysis of the ebony fragments from Wadi el-Jarf.

Besides the Zone 1 with the storage galleries, other parts of the archaeological site of Wadi el-Jarf include camps with huts and shelters for workmen in Zone 2 and several dumps, enclosures and surveillance structures in Zones 3 and 4¹⁴¹. These structures are situated ca. 500 meters to the north of the galleries on top of small rocky hillocks. The elevated positions granted the people spending the night inside additional protection against possible danger¹⁴². Another part of the site, known as Mina el-Jarf, i.e., the harbor, is situated approximately 5 km to the east from the zones described above. There, in Zone 6, a huge L-shaped jetty¹⁴³ was constructed to create a safe marina for the ships and protect them from northern winds frequent in this part of the Red Sea. Part of it can still be seen in the low tide. Its length when complete was approximately 160 meters, and it created a calm water area of ca. 2.5 hectares. Such a big marina implies a large number of ships using the harbor, leading to some speculations that it was also the starting point for the maritime expeditions to Punt. However, in the present state of knowledge of the site this hypothesis cannot be proved. Nevertheless, the active use of the harbor is confirmed by a discovery of numerous stone anchors and storage jars on the sea bed to the south of the jetty, where the vessels evidently fell from the ships. On the shore, a cluster of small dwellings built of stone and an “alamat” – a visual landmark, existed.

150 meters far from the harbor, a big rectangular isolated building was discovered, which was labelled as Zone 5. This structure belongs to the “toothcomb” type of buildings due to its characteristic plan¹⁴⁴. In fact, in its initial phase it consisted of two adjacent structures build of stone and orientated east-west. One of them, that is lying to the north, is labeled as

¹³⁸ Ibid.: 175.

¹³⁹ Borchardt 1909: 68.

¹⁴⁰ Dixon 1961: 175.

¹⁴¹ Tallet – Marouard – Laisney 2012: 431.

¹⁴² There are indications that the desert coast, on which Wadi al-Jarf is located, presented some danger in the form of a sudden attack by hostile nomads. See the discussion on **Source 6** dating to the 6th Dynasty, pp. 41–42.

¹⁴³ See Tallet – Marouard 2016: 140 for the plan of the structure.

¹⁴⁴ For the plan of the building, see Tallet – Marouard 2016: 144.

Building 1. Its dimensions are 20 meters from east to west and approximately 14 meters from north to south. It has five long rooms arranged in parallel and oriented north-south. Building 2 lying just to the south of Building 1 has similar orientation, but is longer, measuring 40 by 7 meters. It has 9 rooms. Rooms in both buildings are more than 3 meters wide and span for the whole width of their respective building. Several rooms situated on the entrance controlled the access to the interior of the buildings. In the enclosed space in between the two buildings an accumulation of stone anchors for ships was found. Some had remnants of sea urchins attached to them, which indicates that they were in actual use. According to the excavators, this building was a storeroom and a dormitory for the workers, where the members of the expeditions could rest before crossing the Gulf of Suez other day. Among the architectural and functional parallels from other Old Kingdom sites, workers' dormitories from Heit el-Ghorab and comb-like structures to the west of the pyramid of Khafre are cited.

After the end of the reign of Khufu, when the phase of active use of Wadi el-Jarf ended and all the maritime activities were transferred to the North, to Ayn Soukhna, the building in Zone 5 was abandoned, galleries in Zone 1 were emptied and closed with portcullises, and pottery kilns there razed. However, later on, the building in Zone 5 was reused for a short time. Inside the long rooms transverse walls were built, creating dwellings for a small number of people. According to the sealings with the Horus name of Khafre on them, this phase of sporadic occupation is to be dated to the reign of this King¹⁴⁵.

The discussion of the evidence for Egypt – Punt interconnections during the 4th Dynasty will not be complete without mentioning a figure of a man supposedly of Puntite origin found in mastaba G5150. This mastaba is situated in the Western cemetery in Giza and belongs to Seshathetep Heti, whose major titles were those of the King's son and vizier¹⁴⁶. On the western wall of its chapel a standing man is depicted. Several iconographic elements, such as the long headdress with the specific headband, the short beard and a peculiar sack which the man holds (see Fig.6), let some scholars to associate this figure with Puntites from the reliefs of the mortuary temple of Sahure from Abusir (see below, Chapter 3). The man's name is *Hrt̄si* and he is labelled as *nhs*, that is, “nubian”. This label was explained by some scholars with the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.: 149–150.

¹⁴⁶ Junker 1934: 172–195; Tallet 2013: 192–193.

assumption that for the Egyptians, Puntites were also considered as *nḥsyw* as a general ethnonym.



Fig. 6. Hertjesi the nḥs from mastaba G5150 belonging to Seshathetep Heti, Giza, Western cemetery. From Junker 1934: Taf.16.

The chronology of the tomb is debated¹⁴⁷. It is usually dated to the 5th Dynasty¹⁴⁸ but new studies accept the earlier date, down to Khafre, or even Khufu or Djedefre¹⁴⁹. This makes it harder to evaluate the importance of this relief as an independent source on the Egypt – Punt interconnections. It is uncertain whether the relief indeed does depict a man from Punt who travelled to Egypt. Label does not offer any help in the identification, for it gives vague information, and Puntite origin of the

man cannot be proved solely on the basis of his iconography without any additional evidence. Furthermore, this relief is not associated with the royal sphere (see criterion №4 on page 5). For these reasons this relief will not be further discussed as a source on the Egypt – Punt interconnections and is not included in the Annex 1.

To sum up, there is some evidence available on the Egypt – Punt interconnections during the earlier part of the Old Kingdom, namely, during the reigns of Snefru and his son and successor Khufu. Unfortunately, the scarcity of sources would prevent one from making far-reaching conclusions and limit oneself to making assumptions. However, these assumptions are

¹⁴⁷ See the summary on dating of the mastaba on Digital Giza website, available at <http://giza.fas.harvard.edu/sites/536/full/>.

¹⁴⁸ Junker 1934: 173.

¹⁴⁹ Tallet 2013: 192.

very important if considered in complex. It is important to note that 30 years ago, before the discovery of the sites of Wadi el-Jarf and Ayn Soukhna, the knowledge of the ancient Egyptian activities on the Red Sea in such an early period was very limited. Hopefully, new discoveries, both in the Nile valley and on the shores of the Red Sea, would broaden our knowledge of the Egypt – Punt interconnections and possibly confirm (or possibly disprove) the hypotheses outlined above.

3. Interconnections during the 5th and 6th Dynasties

3.1. Reign of Sahure. Palermo stone and valley temple in Abusir

There is no evidence of Egypt – Punt interconnections during the second half of the 4th Dynasty. The end of the dynasty is somewhat obscure¹⁵⁰. There might have been a minor succession crisis, as a result of which the lateral branch of the royal family came to power, represented by Userkaf, who founded 5th Dynasty. Other scholars, such as prof. Miroslav Verner (2001: 588) claim that Userkaf was the brother of Shepseskaf, the last ruler of the 4th Dynasty. In any case, the central administrative apparatus in the Residence does not seem to have undergone significant changes and retained continuity in the transition between the 4th and the 5th Dynasties. On the Red Sea shore, on the other hand, significant changes took place. During the reign of Khafre, a new port was established in Ayn Soukhna, known to the ancient Egyptians as *B3t*¹⁵¹. On the rocks surrounding the site and inside its galleries¹⁵² textual and archaeological evidence for expeditions to the Sinai during several consecutive reigns have been discovered¹⁵³. The reason for this move was probably due to the distance between Wadi el-Jarf and main administrative centers of the era. Wadi el-Jarf's position was efficient, when the center of the Memphite region was situated close to Dahshur and Meidum. However, after the transfer of the residence to the North, to the vicinity of Giza and Abusir, the distance became too big, creating communicational difficulties¹⁵⁴. The new port in Ayn Soukhna, which lies on the shortest track from the Memphite region to the Red Sea, solved this problem¹⁵⁵. Furthermore, the water source of the oasis of Ayn Soukhna lied much closer to the port, than the spring of St. Paul monastery to Wadi el-Jarf. During the second half of the 4th Dynasty, when the monumental pyramid complexes of Khafre and Menkaure at Giza were under construction, the huge flow of copper from Sinai to the Memphite region probably continued. However, during the 5th Dynasty, when the pyramid building practices changed and masonry layers of the pyramids were not laid as precisely as during the 5th Dynasty¹⁵⁶, the need for copper might have decreased, which would possibly allow the royal administration to focus on dispatching expeditions to more distant journeys, which possibly provided a new impulse for

¹⁵⁰ Dodson – Hilton 2004: 55–64.

¹⁵¹ El-Awady 2011 and Tallet 2019.

¹⁵² The site of Ayn Soukhna will not be described here in detail, because, in contrast with Wadi el-Jarf, the site did not provide any relevant evidence of Egypt – Punt interconnections. Thus, its description remains outside the scope of this paper. For the description of the site, see Tallet – Lehner 2021: 44–53 and Tallet 2015: 37–46.

¹⁵³ For a summary of the expeditions going through Ayn Soukhna, see Tallet 2015: 60.

¹⁵⁴ Tallet – Lehner 2021: 125–126.

¹⁵⁵ Tallet 2015: 37.

¹⁵⁶ Lehner 1997: 140–141; Zamarovský 1986: 284–285.

the Egypt – Punt interconnections. Fortunately, several sources of different types have been preserved, providing a lot of valuable information about these contacts.

The main difference between the second half of the Old Kingdom and the previous period from the point of view of the Egypt – Punt interconnection lies in the fact that there

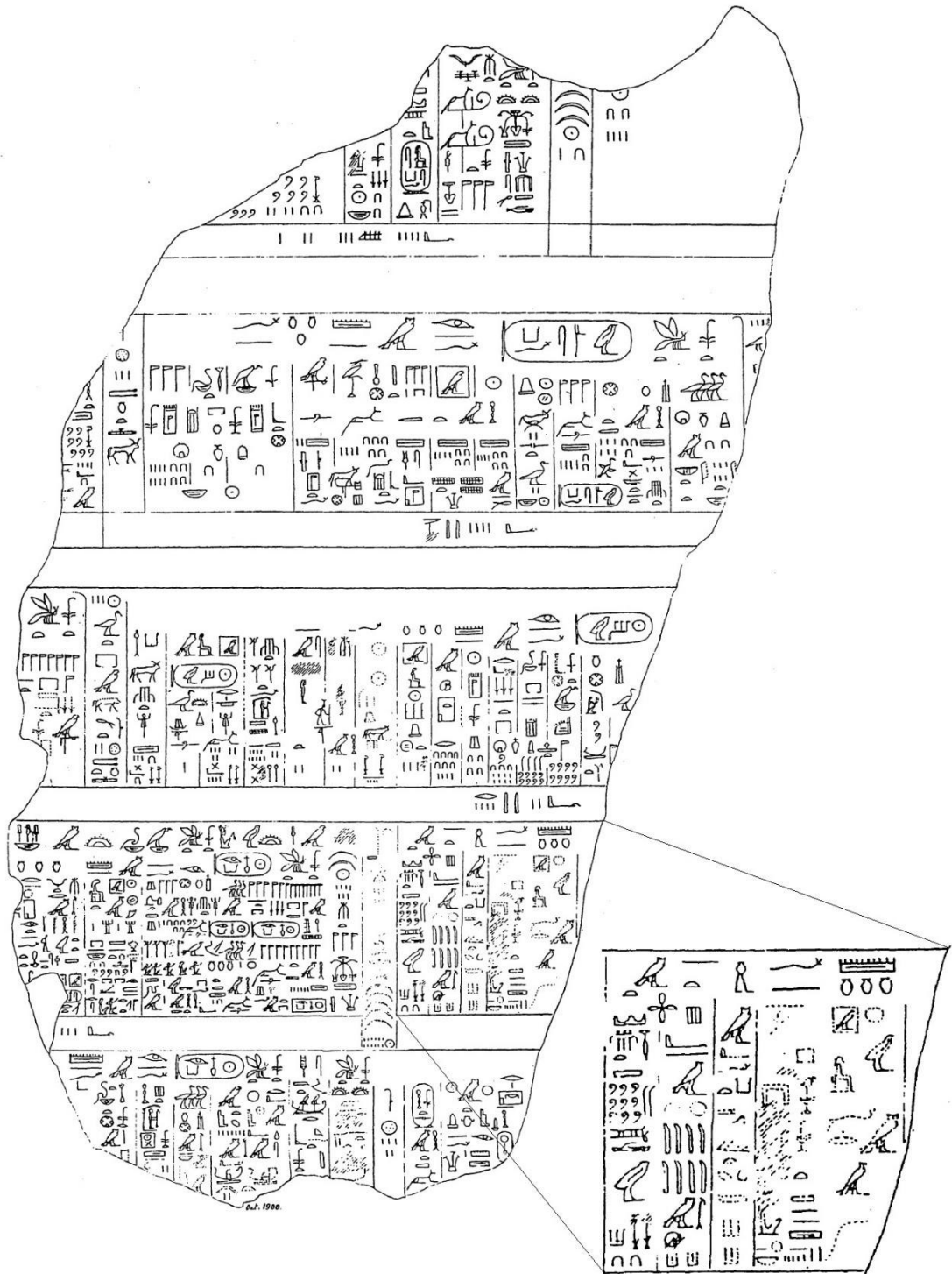



Fig. 7. Verso of the Palermo Stone with the last regnal year of Sahure enlarged in a box.
From Wilkinson 2000: fig.3.

are written sources available to study. They can be used for reconstruction of historic events associated with these long-range contacts. The main source of information here is the Palermo Stone. This stele of black basalt ca. 44 cm high and 25 cm wide includes information about the reigns of Kings from the 1st to the 5th Dynasties, which is inscribed on both sides. The stone's surface is divided into rectangular year blocks, each devoted to a separate regnal year of a certain King¹⁵⁷. Unfortunately, the stone's preservation is far from complete. Right after its creation, it probably measured more than 2 meters wide. Six more fragments of the same block of annals are known, but, unfortunately, they cannot add further details on Egypt – Punt interconnections. It is important to note that the date of the creation of the stone is uncertain. Wide range of dates from the 3rd to the 25th Dynasty was proposed¹⁵⁸, and the question is still obscured by numerous hypotheses which are difficult to confirm. However, the Palermo stone is very important as a source offering valuable insights of the royal concerns in various spheres of life, from the temple and palace building to the religious ceremonies. The fact that an expedition to Punt is mentioned in annals like the Palermo Stone, indicates the primary importance of this enterprise for the king.

The Land of Punt, written here as , is mentioned on the verso of the stone, in the fourth register (see Fig.7.), in the penultimate year register of the reign of the second King of the 5th Dynasty, Sahure. This is the earliest known mention of the toponym “Punt”. It is mentioned in the context of a large expedition which returned successfully in the penultimate regnal year of this King. The year is tentatively equated with the 13th regnal year of Sahure. Unfortunately, it is impossible to verify the date since the stone is incomplete.

In general, the part of the annals concerning the expedition which is of main interest here is as follows (see the box in Fig.7 and **Source №3** in Annex 1):

int m mfk3t hmt(?) 6000?

Pwnt ʕntyw 80000 dꜥm [...] 6000 (?) w3d-šsmt 2900 [...]dw 23020 (?)

(What was) brought from (the Land of) Turquoise:

6000? (measures of) copper?

Punt:

80000 (measures of) ʕntyw-incense; 6000? (measures of) electrum; 2900 (measures of) malachite; 23,020 (measures of) [an]du.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Kitchen 2001: 234.

¹⁵⁸ Wilkinson 2000: 28–45.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.: 168.

From this entry one can infer that in the penultimate regnal year of Sahure a big expedition returned to the Residence and brought rich cargo of various metals, possibly malachite and, above all, *ꜥntyw*-incense. Although the unit of measurement of the cargo is not mentioned in the annals, the amount still seems to be very significant. It is also important to note that the cargo from Punt consisting of *ꜥntyw*-incense, electrum and other raw materials is directly associated with the load of copper from (the Land of) Turquoise, i.e., the Sinai. This might indicate, that one expedition went forth from Memphis, reached the Red Sea shore, split into two (or more?) parts, and each of these parts visited its own destination in order to obtain necessary goods. If this interpretation is correct, one might suppose that the expedition would have needed a base on the Red Sea shore, which could serve as a starting point to the maritime part of the journey and where the expedition parts heading for Sinai and Punt split. In the present state of knowledge, Ayn Soukhna is the only known candidate for such a place. If the Palermo stone is considered to be historically accurate, it would represent both the earliest textual source of Egypt – Punt interconnections, and the unique evidence of the role the intermittent port at Ayn Sukhna played in these interconnections. The source is highly relevant for the present thesis, for it is securely positioned in the royal sphere, explicitly mentions the toponym “Punt”, has references both to the Red Sea (via Sinai) and exotic imports, and is tentatively dated to the Old Kingdom. As was mentioned above, the date of the creation of the monument is far from certain. However, as Spalinger (1994: 281, fn.12) states,

*“It must be kept in mind that the Palermo Stone is a product of Dynasty 5 and, as such, could have been prone to mistakes and interpolations by the annalist(s). It is therefore a less valid source for reconstructing the regnal years (numbering and names) than the **contemporary data**¹⁶⁰”.*

Fortunately, since 2002, we have at our disposal those very contemporary data that can at least partially confirm the information extracted from the Palermo stone. This source, which undoubtedly date to the reign of Sahure, is a collection of reliefs discovered by the Egyptian archaeological mission during the excavations of the causeway of the pyramid complex of Sahure in Abusir ¹⁶¹ (see Fig.1, p.13 and **Source №4** in Annex 1). The block *SC/south/2003/07*¹⁶² provides the most important iconographic source of information about Egypt – Punt interconnections, as it depicts the King cutting the bark of *ꜥnd*-tree to obtain

¹⁶⁰ Emphasis added by the author.

¹⁶¹ The whole pyramid complex is published in Borchardt 1909 and Borchardt 1913.

¹⁶² El-Awady 2009: Pl. 5.

aromatic resin in the upper register and the fleet returning from the journey on the two lowest registers¹⁶³. This demonstrates the relevance of the relief as a source for the present thesis, as it is firmly dated to the 5th Dynasty reign of Sahure, it depicts an *ʿnd*-tree which associates the scene with Punt, and it originates in the royal mortuary sphere and depicts the King.

Unlike the famous Punt reliefs from the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari, the recovered blocks do not depict any other cargo from Punt. The only possible exception could be several monkeys climbing on the rigging of the ships in the two lower registers (see Fig.8.). These monkeys, according to the reliefs could be either hamadryas baboons (*Papio hamadryas*), or vervet monkeys (*Chlorocebus aethiops* or *C. pygerythrus*)¹⁶⁴. Modern natural habitat of the former includes Sudan, Ethiopia Somalia and the southwest of the Arabian Peninsula, while the latter “is widely distributed in Africa south of Sahara”¹⁶⁵. The presence of these animals on the reliefs additionally associates them with Punt.

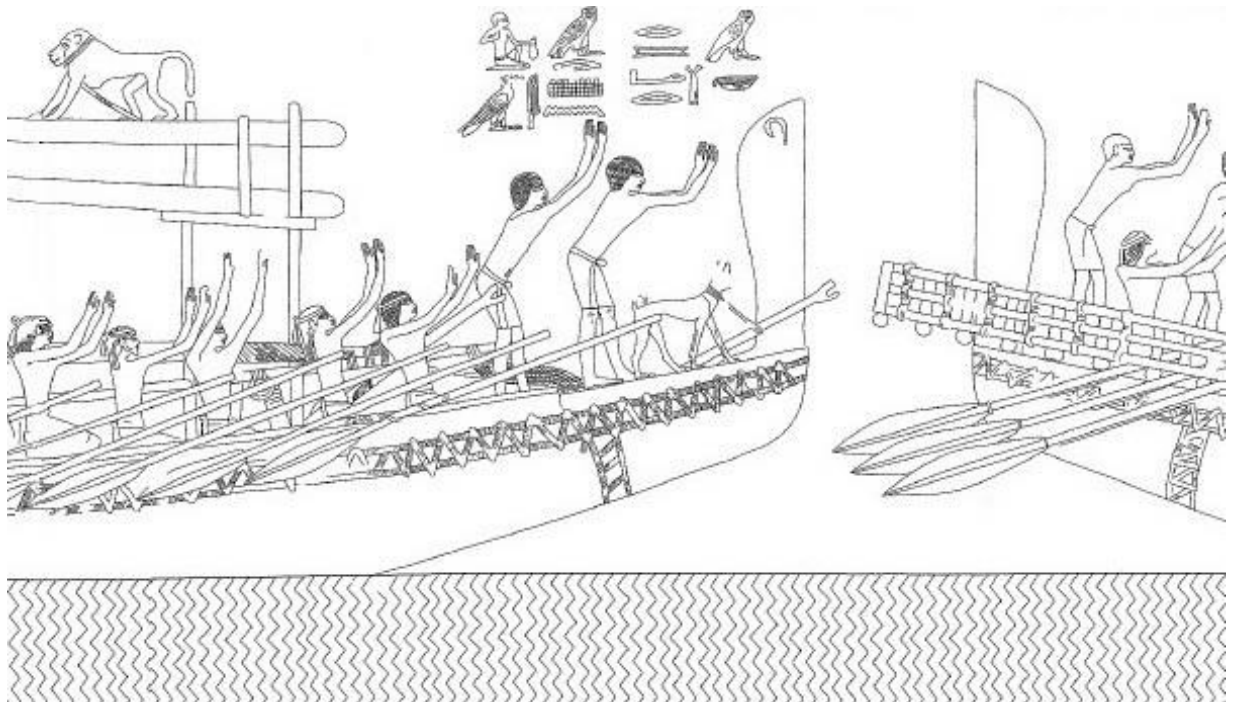


Fig. 8. Kaaper, Menia and the crew of Sahura venerate the King on board of the ship returning from Punt.
From El-Awady 2009: Pl.5.

The reliefs of Sahure are also very important as one of the earliest sources preserving any evidence of the people who participated in these enterprises. Three of the leaders of the expedition are depicted, their names being *K3(=i)-ʿpr(.w)*, *Mni3* (see Fig.8.) and *Wsr[...]*. It is

¹⁶³ Ibid.: 155–166.

¹⁶⁴ See Osborn – Osbornová 1998: 32 – 41, esp. 33, fig. 4-6. This relief from the 4th Dynasty depicting two types of monkeys presents excellent parallels to the depictions of monkeys from Punt on the reliefs from the causeway of Sahura.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.: 40.

also important to note the similarity of the headdresses and short beards of some of the ordinary members of the crews with those of the aforementioned *nhs* Hertjesy from G5150. Their resemblance led some scholars to believe that the people depicted on the ships of Sahure are in fact Puntites coming to Egypt to venerate the King. Others¹⁶⁶, on the contrary, consider these people as Asian immigrants serving the King as sailors, and associate them with the temple complex at Tell Ibrahim Awad in the Eastern Delta¹⁶⁷. In any case, the identification of the crew members (if possible in the current state of knowledge) is a secondary question which cannot deny that the ships are returning from Punt.

However, it is very problematic to say with certainty if the **Source 3** (entry in the Palermo stone) and **Source 4** (relief on the block *SC/south/2003/07* from Abusir) refer to the same event. Indeed, it is possible that the reign of Sahure saw not one, but two successful expeditions to Punt. This could possibly be supported by the fact that the Palermo stone does not mention the fresh *ʿnd*-trees which were, according to the reliefs, brought from Punt. One may not agree with this statement, for there are no evidence on transporting the trees, as was depicted on the New Kingdom reliefs from Deir el-Bahari. Indeed, the trees could have grown from seeds planted in the garden of Sahure. However, in any case, both the Abusir relief and the Palermo stone preserve important evidence on Egypt – Punt interconnections during the reign of Sahure, and this evidence cannot be neglected.

3.2. Reign of Djedkare Isesi and the 6th Dynasty

The second half of the Old Kingdom was the era which saw the growth of political weight and influence of the officials of non-royal origin, as well as development and importance of provinces and local elites centered there¹⁶⁸. At least from the reign of Niuserre on¹⁶⁹ the funerary monuments created by the officials of non-royal descent functioning on different levels of society increase in number. The King sent his officials, often those based in provinces, on an expedition to obtain raw materials necessary for the functioning of the cult or royal

¹⁶⁶ For example, Bietak 2010.

¹⁶⁷ The Eastern Delta site of Tell Ibrahim Awad, which is excavated from 1988 by NEFARE (Netherlands Foundation for Archaeological Research in Egypt), owes its importance to the sequence of temple buildings constructed purportedly according to the Near Eastern tradition, different layers dating from the Dynasty 0 to the 11th Dynasty. The possible Near Eastern connection stimulated several theories on the role of this purportedly foreign community in the Old Kingdom Egypt, see van Haarlem 1996, 2000, 2005; Bietak 2010; Belova 2002 and Eigner 2000, 2003.

¹⁶⁸ Bussmann 2020:

¹⁶⁹ Bárta 2017: 285–287; Dodson – Hilton 2004: 66–67.

administration, the official accomplished the mission, achieved the King's benevolence and immortalized this achievement in his tomb. This led to the emergence of a specific autobiographic self-representational narrative of an official as a traveller¹⁷⁰, which imbued its narrator with additional prestige. Under these conditions, the importance of officials of the 1st nome of Upper Egypt, centered on the island of Elephantine, increased a lot¹⁷¹. They were often actively involved in various desert or Red Sea enterprises, including the military expeditions or expeditions to Punt. This can be partly explained by their experience of dealing with foreign countries, for the 1st nome lay on the southern border of Egypt with Nubia. Their high position among the other local elites of the late Old Kingdom due to the strategic position of their nome and lucrative far distance trade which went through it might offer another explanation. Thus, the characteristic feature of this era from the point of view of the Egypt – Punt interconnections is that these contacts are mentioned in the documents of the non-royal origin, nevertheless still closely connected to the royal sphere. The following textual source belongs to this type. Although dating to the reign of the last King of the 6th Dynasty, Pepi II Neferkare, it is recalling an event almost one hundred years old, that happened during the reign of Djedkare Isesi, the eighth King of the 5th Dynasty.

The reign of Djedkare Isesi, which lasted over 40 years, was important from several points of view. First of all, provincial officials became more and more independent from the King¹⁷², and central officials gained more and more power and privileges that were previously reserved only for the royal family¹⁷³. The reign saw an increase in caravan traffic through the Eastern desert, which is testified by several dated inscriptions in the desert¹⁷⁴. Expeditions were also sent to the Levant to obtain wood. Evidently, such an active expedition activity resulted in important successes, which were remembered many years ago. Thus, the already mentioned autobiographic inscription of Harkhuf¹⁷⁵ which was found in his tomb QH34 in Qubbet el-Hawa necropolis includes the royal letter of the King Pepi II Neferkare to Harkhuf, that is included in Annex 1 as **Source №5**. Harkhuf received this letter from the King as a reply to his report, where he informs the King about his successful return from Yam. According to the King's letter, in the original report, after having informed the King of the success of the mission,

¹⁷⁰ Marcolin – Diego Espinel 2011: 585.


¹⁷¹ Kees 1961: 110.

¹⁷² Altenmüller 2001: 600.

¹⁷³ A good example of such case is provided by the extensive use of blue color, which had strong royal connotations in the first part of the Old Kingdom, in the tomb of Khuwy, who is buried in mastaba near the royal pyramid complex in South Saqqara. For an introduction of the tomb and its owner, see Megahed 2021.

¹⁷⁴ Kees 1961: 122–123.

¹⁷⁵ Urk.I, 126–131, translated in Lichtheim 2006: 23–27.

Harkhuf mentioned a  *dng*-dwarf¹⁷⁶ “from the land of the horison-dwellers”, who was obtained by his expedition and could dance for the amusement of the King. This *dng* is said to have been “*like that one which was brought from Punt by the sealbearer of the god Bawerdjed in the time of Isesi*”. This inscription provides relevant evidence about Egypt – Punt interconnection under the King Djedkare Isesi, as it is date in the text to the 5th Dynasty reign of the aforementioned King, it explicitly mentions Punt and the *dng*-dwarf, who were often brought to Egypt from this region, and, although being preserved in the private mortuary milieu, it belongs to the royal epistolary document, thereby being associate with the King’s person.

Unfortunately, there is no evidence from the reign of Djedkare Isesi, that would confirm not only the success of this expedition to Punt, but ethe existence of Bawerdjed himself. However, there is some evidence that might confirm his historicity. This evidence exists in a form of several inscribed reliefs from Saqqara dating to the 6th Dynasty, now being preserved in the Ancient Egyptian Museum in Shibuya, Tokyo, and in private collections in the USA. These relief fragments¹⁷⁷ once belonged to the mastaba of an official called Iny, who was sent with the expedition to Byblos by Pepi I, accomplished the mission successfully and “*was more valuable in the sight of his Majesty than the sealbearer of the god Werdjedeba in the time of Isesi*”¹⁷⁸. Here evidently the same official of Djedkare Isesi is mentioned, bearing the same major title. It is possible that because of his outstanding successes on the King’s service he became a role model, who, when mentioned in an autobiographical inscription, endowed other officials who served their Kings with respect and authority.

The two remaining sources on Egypt – Punt interconnections discussed in the present thesis seem to refer to the contemporaneous events. The **Source №6** (see Annex 1), like the previous one, comes from the same private mortuary sphere. This is an autobiographic text, which is found in the tomb QH35b in the same necropolis of Qubbet el-Hawa, belonging to Pepinakht Heqaib¹⁷⁹, a nomarch who ruled the 1st Upper Egyptian nome under the King Pepi II Neferkare. He was sent by the King on several military missions to Nubia and Eastern Desert and brought back prisoners. During one of his missions, he had a special task to bring back to the Nile Valley the body of captain Anankhet. This official was sent with his men on the expedition to Punt and was killed by the “Asiatics who are on the sand” while building the

¹⁷⁶ See Urk.I, 128.

¹⁷⁷ The fragments are published in Marcolin 2006 and Marcolin – Diego Espinel 2011.

¹⁷⁸ Marcolin – Diego Espinel 2011: 581.

¹⁷⁹ Habachi 1977. For the autobiographic text see Urk.I 131–135, translation in Lichtheim 1988: 15–16.

kbn.t-ship in the “land of Asiatics”. It is possible that the place where the massacre happened was Ayn Soukhna¹⁸⁰, as it is situated in the liminal zone with the Levant in the desert environment. Also, there are inscriptions mentioning *kbn.t*-ships preserved in Ayn Soukhna¹⁸¹.

Despite the fact that the expedition led by Anankhet was not successful and, in the matter of fact, the contact between Egypt and Punt did not happen this time, the autobiographic inscription of Heqaib clarifies several important details on the *modus operandi* of the Egypt – Punt interconnections in the end of the Old Kingdom. First of all, this textual source can confirm the data obtained during the excavations in the so-called “intermittent ports”. The concept of a Red Sea port on the periphery outside of the area permanently controlled by the Egyptian authorities, which emerged after the excavations, seems to be confirmed by this inscription. Then, the fate of Anankhet and his crew demonstrates the dangers that the Egyptians faced when they used the intermittent port, as well as the weakness of the royal administration at the end of the Old Kingdom, which was unable to provide adequate security for the expedition.

The last source presenting evidence on Egypt – Punt interconnections discussed in the present thesis can be found in the same site as the two previous ones – namely, in Qubbet el-Hawa necropolis near Aswan. The **Source №7** (see Annex 1) is an inscription of *hrp zh*¹⁸² Khnumhotep on one of the pillars inside the tomb QH34e belonging to Khui, who was a nomarch of the 1st nome of Upper Egypt with the center at Elephantine at the very end of the 6th Dynasty, during the second half of the reign of Pepi II Neferkare. Khnumhotep was one of the dependents of nomarch Khui, and mentioned him in the inscription. The nomarch apparently let him to share the tomb with him for some unknown reason, and to have his own false door installed inside. The inscription itself goes as follows (see Fig.9):

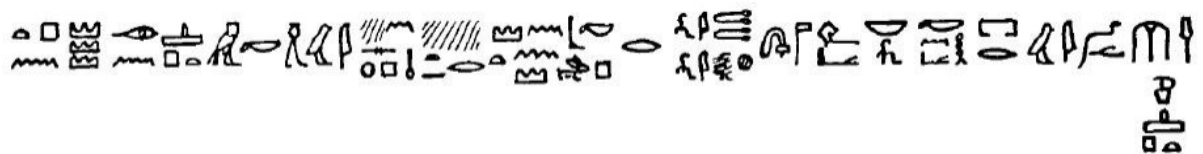


Fig. 9. The inscription of Khnumhotep from the tomb QH34e belonging to nomarch Khui.
From Newberry 1938: 182, fig.1.

“The director of the dining hall, Khnumhotep, says: I went forth with my Lord, the noble prince, the sealbearer of the god, Tjetji (and) Khui, to Byblos (and)

¹⁸⁰ Tallet 2013: 191.

¹⁸¹ Tallet 2015: 39, 41. For a discussion about this type of vessel in a wider historical context see Bradbury 1996.

¹⁸² Jones 2000: 2682.

Punt, [...] times. I was brought back in peace, after I did [=trespassed] those foreign countries”.

This inscription can be considered autobiographic, for here Khnumhotep uses the aforementioned narrative of the official as a traveler by stating that he visited Byblos and Punt several times. These two localities are sometimes used as geographic opposite concepts, Byblos being the equivalent of Punt on the North. To name them both in one inscription can mean the same thing as to designate the united Egypt as the Two Lands – here the concept of totality and wholeness is implied. It is possible that in reality Khnumhotep did not visit both Byblos and Punt, thus making this inscription unreliable as a source on Egypt – Punt interconnections. However, Newberry mentions other inscriptions in Wadi Hammamat, where the sealbearer of the god, Tjetji, is mentioned¹⁸³. This could be considered a confirmation that at least one of the expeditions to Punt mentioned by Khnumhotep happened in reality. There is a possibility that the Middle Kingdom intermittent port of Mersa Gawasis existed already in the late 6th Dynasty, provided that the excavations on the site are not yet completed and can produce new dating material¹⁸⁴. Newberry considers a possibility that the inscription of Tjetji could have been made on the way to or from the Red Sea shore as a part of his route to Punt.

Despite the fact that the historical accurateness of this source may be debated, it nevertheless provides important evidence on the Egypt – Punt interconnections during the last reign of the 6th Dynasty. The inscription seems to be well dated by the context where it is found – the cultural environment of the tomb QH34e of Khui, where the inscription’s author also was buried. The inscription of Tjetji can provide additional aid in dating efforts¹⁸⁵. The inscription mentions Punt, which brings clarity to the geographic frame of the possible expedition(s). However, there is no mentions of the reigning King in it. Despite this fact this inscription still was included in the Annex 1, for the omission of the King in it was not incidental. As can be seen from other sources, such as, for example, **Source 5**, in the end of the 6th Dynasty the King seems not to have played an important role in planning or organizing expeditions. Instead, he was replaced with the officials, often members of provincial elites, and kept the role of the final beneficiary of these enterprises. This was the result of the long-term development of internal political situation in Egypt, when the authority of the King was slowly eroding, and finally was

¹⁸³ Newberry 1938: 183.

¹⁸⁴ Tallet 2013: 191, fn.13

¹⁸⁵ However, Lebedev (2015: 439 and 446) dates both of the inscriptions to the First Intermediate period.

eclipsed by the families of local elites¹⁸⁶. Thus, **Source 7** was considered relevant according to the criteria of relevance, and included in the thesis as the provider of useful evidence helping to make the following conclusions.

4. Conclusions

In the lengthy process of preparation of the present thesis, many publications were studied in order to define as many sources on the Egypt – Punt interconnections as possible. Numerous sources of iconographic, textual or archaeological type make it possible to achieve complete and up to date conclusions that would most fully reflect the reality of these long distance contacts. The sources were analysed for their relevance with the help of four precise criteria of relevance. This analysis revealed two important aspects which will be useful for further studies of the Egypt – Punt interconnections.

Firstly, it is important to note that according to the Annex 1, during certain time frames within the Old Kingdom sources of certain type prevailed. During the 4th Dynasty and the early 5th Dynasty archaeological or iconographic sources were predominantly attested¹⁸⁷, while for the 6th Dynasty typical source was of textual character. This can be possibly explained by the fact that at the end of the Old Kingdom the history of Egypt – Punt interconnections already spanned for nearly two or even three hundred years. The Egyptians became more used to the contacts with this distant southern region, elites were seeking its prestigious products for themselves. The voyages to Punt became common to such an extent that the middle-ranked official like Khnumhotep claimed to have visited Punt (and Byblos) several times, a deed which would probably be considered impossible for the person of his rank and indeed marvellous accomplishment in the earlier times, during the reign of Snefru. This can demonstrate that the Egyptians improved their long distance travel skills at that moment. The overall lack of sources of archaeological type can be explained by the fact that all the products which were brought from Punt and which would have a potential to become archaeological sources were consumed or reworked soon after their arrival to Egypt. Because of their high value the preservation of their remains or residues is very unlikely.

Secondly, each type of the sources has its advantages and disadvantages. The archaeological sources, like the ebony from Wadi el-Jarf, can provide various information from

¹⁸⁶ Bárta 2020: 288f.

¹⁸⁷ The Palermo stone as a textual source on the Egypt – Punt interconnections during the reign of Sahure might be in this case considered an exception due to the chronological uncertainty of its creation. When considered on its own without other sources, the information it provides must be questioned.

the geographic range of the long-distance trade and particular location of certain events to the verification of chronology with using the radiocarbon dating. Unfortunately, they are often scarce due to the remoteness of the studied era in time. Iconographic sources can provide important details on the appearance and characteristic features of different species of plants and animals as well as peoples, which in its turn can help to identify the geographic frame of the long-distance contacts. Depictions also can be useful in describing technology available to the expeditions, including shipbuilding, the equipment used by workers etc. However, they are sometimes useless in identifying the precise place of the event, and are often vague as to physical properties of the commodities depicted. The artistic canons and conventions applied by the ancient Egyptians to the iconographic sources can also distort reality. Textual sources, in their turn, are able to provide a lot of information on the social circumstances of a certain era, the amounts of cargo brought, which in its turn hints at the size of the expedition and approximate amount of people involved. Textual sources also help to understand the level of knowledge of the ancient Egyptians themselves by transferring to the modern scholar the information gathered in the ancient times. Titles of the expedition leaders, their names, possible personal information, as well as such crucial information as date and reign during which the event occurred are also revealed via the textual sources. However, they completely lack any visual information and sometimes do not correlate with other types of sources, thus remaining without archaeological confirmation. In conclusion, it is necessary to consider all the available sources in complex, for, as was several times proven during the work on this thesis, they often supplement each other. When considered in complex, they can provide a more or less creditable information on Egypt – Punt interconnections during the Old Kingdom. The scarcity of relevant sources asks for more fieldwork not only in the Red Sea shores, where archaeological sources can be discovered, but also in the Nile Valley and the desert. Every newly discovered source has a potential to substantially deepen our knowledge of the subject¹⁸⁸.

Finally, it is necessary to end the present thesis with conclusions drawn about the development of Egypt – Punt interconnections in the early period of the Ancient Egyptian history based on the collected sources. The sources seem to hint that the wide-scale enterprises of the Egyptian state on the Red Sea shore started at the dawn of the era of great pyramid builders. The appearance of the earliest sources on Egypt – Punt interconnections directly followed the start of the great expeditions for copper, which led to the creation of the

¹⁸⁸ For example, the recent discovery of the so-called South Saqqara Stone could potentially have added new textual sources on Egypt – Punt interconnections during the 6th Dynasty. Unfortunately, the object is very damaged, see Baud – Dobrev 1995.

sophisticated infrastructure necessary for the long seaborne journeys and transfer of large amounts of cargo through the desert. Indeed, it is possible to say that the pyramids “opened” the seaborne way to Punt for the Egyptians. During the earlier part of the Old Kingdom these enterprises were tightly controlled by the royal court. The evolution of the “intermittent ports” shows that one of the main reasons of creation a new port (Ayn Soukhna instead of Wadi el-Jarf and later on Mersa Gawasis instead of Ayn Soukhna) was the proximity to the royal residential and administrative center¹⁸⁹. The concentration of the sources in the areas close to the port itself of the Residence seem to confirm this. In the later times, when the royal court loosened control over the organization of the expeditions and its central authority diminished, the task was delegated to the members of (local) elites, and the sources became more detached from the central power.

However, it is impossible to obtain the complete picture of Egypt – Punt interconnections without considering the environment on the other side of these contacts – the Land of Punt and its neighbors in Sudan. Thus, the work in the southern direction, both on the Red Sea shore and inland, including the extensive fieldwork, should be the future priority for the scholars working on Egypt – Punt interconnections.

¹⁸⁹ Tallet 2015: 63.

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7. List of Abbreviations

BD	Book of the Dead
BIFAO	Bulletin de l’Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale (IFAO) (Cairo)
CT	Coffin Texts
Fn.	footnote
PT	Pyramid Texts
Urk.	“Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums”, 8 vols. eds. K.Sethe, H.W. Helck, H. Schäfer, H. Grapow, O.Firchow, 1903–1957 (Leipzig/Berlin)