

Merneptah's Campaign to Canaan and the Egyptian Occupation of the Southern Coastal Plain of Palestine in the Ramesside Period

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Alt's theory that the Ramesside kings of the 19th and early 20th dynasties imposed direct Egyptian rule over large parts of the southern coast of Palestine has been fully corroborated by recent archaeological research. It is now possible to reconstruct the subsequent phases of the "Egyptianization" of the Shephelah, which more or less correspond to the reigns of Ramses II, Merneptah and Ramses III. In the first phase, strategic places on the "Via Maris," such as Aphek and Ashdod, were turned into Egyptian bases. Later, Merneptah eliminated the last Canaanite city-kingdoms on the southern coast, Ashkelon and Gezer, thereby turning the entire route between Gaza and Aphek into a virtual Egyptian highway. Domination of Gezer was also imperative for an attempt to penetrate into the central hill country. Merneptah's clash with the tribes of Israel should perhaps be understood in that context. After a gap of about two decades in the documentation, the Egyptian reinforcement policy reached its climax under Ramses III. With the annexation of Lachish, Tel Sera^c, and perhaps Tell eš-Şafi, Egyptian jurisdiction extended to the foothills of the Judean mountains. However, this short-lived "swan song" of the Egyptian Empire in Canaan, characterized by extensive economic activities centered around Egyptian religious institutions, ended shortly after Ramses III's rule.

Alt's theory (1944), according to which the Ramesside kings of the 19th and early 20th dynasties imposed direct Egyptian rule over large parts of the southern coast of Palestine, has been fully corroborated by recent archaeological research (see Weinstein 1981; Na'aman 1982; Oren 1984; Goldwasser 1984; Ussishkin 1985). The kings of the 18th Dynasty ruled this large area from government centers at Gaza and Jaffa; toward the end of the Egyptian Empire in the second half of the 12th century B.C., the entire coastal plain extending south of the Yarkon River was under Egyptian jurisdiction. This article will attempt to reconstruct the subsequent phases of

the Egyptian annexation of this vast territory, on the basis of the written sources from Egypt and archaeological evidence from the sites excavated in this region. Special emphasis will be given to the examination of Merneptah's military strategy in his campaign to Canaan.

The offensive to reassert full Egyptian authority over Canaan had started by the beginning of the 19th Dynasty. However, except for the relief of Seti I, depicting clashes with the Shasu at "the town of the Canaan" (Wreszinski 1935: 39), i.e., Gaza (Helck 1971: 192), we have no further evidence from the reigns of Seti I and Ramses II for any military or administrative operations along

the southern Canaanite coast. The relief showing the conquest of Ashkelon, which was formerly attributed to Ramses II, should probably be re-dated to his successor Merneptah.

The list of place names from Ramses II's temple at Amara in Nubia (Edel 1980; see also Mazar 1975) includes several places in the southern coastal plain, Kinahna, Rapihu, Sharuhēn,¹ Muhazzi, Soko, Yapu (Edel 1980: 65–71). However, this list—which is largely parallel to the Soleb list of Amenophis III—cannot serve as evidence for any administrative changes carried out by the Egyptians in the region.

Another text from the same period, the famous letter of an Egyptian scribe to his rival (Pap. Anastasi I; 476–78), altogether omits reference to the southern coastal plain. Perhaps the fact that, according to this literary text, the travelers' hardships end once they reach Jaffa indicates that the coastal road south of this Egyptian stronghold was considered relatively secure.

The archaeological record from excavated sites in southern Palestine provides more direct evidence for the nature and extent of the Egyptian involvement in the region.

At Aphek, on the sources of the Yarkon River, an Egyptian residence was erected on the site of the local Canaanite ruler's palace (Kochavi 1981). The epigraphic finds discovered in it (Kochavi *et al.* 1978; Owen 1981; Singer 1983) leave no doubt that during Ramses II's reign Aphek had already been turned into an Egyptian stronghold, probably under the jurisdiction of the headquarters at Jaffa.

Ashdod also probably was under direct Egyptian rule in the reign of Ramses II. Although the town is not mentioned in Egyptian documents,² the excavations at and around the site have revealed clear evidence for a strong Egyptian presence (M. Dothan 1972: 5; T. Dothan 1973: 376). The most indicative find is a hieroglyphic inscription on a fragment of a doorjamb; it mentions a high-ranking Egyptian official (M. Dothan 1972: 5).³ This may be compared with the doorjamb of the city gate from Jaffa which carries a cartouche of Ramses II (Kaplan 1976: 535). Perhaps one of the public buildings unearthed in Stratum XIV in Area G was the residence of the local Egyptian governor (M. Dothan 1972: 5; T. Dothan 1982: 31). At a site located ca. 4 km northeast of Ashdod, a fragment of a monumental Egyptian statue was discovered in 1970 (Leclant 1971: 259). It carries cartouches of Ramses II.⁴ At

nearby Tel Mor, probably the ancient harbor of Ashdod, the excavations have revealed a strong Egyptian citadel in use at least from Ramses II's reign (M. Dothan 1977: 889; 1981a).

Presumably, this expansionist phase in the Egyptian policy in Canaan started in the southernmost part of the coastal strip, around the government headquarters at Gaza (see Giveon 1975). However, the data from Petrie's excavations at Tell Jemmeh and at Tell el-Far^cah (S) are insufficient to establish accurately the beginning of the Egyptian occupation in this region.⁵

Two phases of an Egyptian-type brickhouse were excavated at Tell Jemmeh (Oren 1984: 46). The architectural remains and finds indicate that the building was used in the 12th century B.C.

At Tell el-Far^cah (S), upstream from Naḥal Besor, the situation is somewhat clearer (Oren 1984). Petrie excavated an elaborate "governor's residence" that contained numerous Egyptian finds. Especially noteworthy are the administrative documents written in hieratic on ostraca. Two architectural phases were discerned in this residence, as at Tell Jemmeh. The Egyptian vessel with the cartouches of Seti II probably came from the earlier phase.

It appears that the two places were annexed to Gaza at the end of the 19th Dynasty. It is not impossible, however, that they had already been annexed in the reign of Ramses II, as at Aphek and Ashdod, but the evidence to support the possibility is still missing.

The picture emerges that in the first phase of the Egyptian reinforcement policy, a phase largely contemporary with Ramses II's long reign (1279–1212 B.C.), the Egyptians took over places on the main coastal highway and turned them into military strongholds and administrative centers. Ashdod, midway between Gaza and Jaffa, became an important supply base for Egyptian convoys traveling north. The same applies to Aphek, which dominates the strategic pass between the sources of the Yarkon and the hills of Ephraim. Probably other places, which have not been excavated yet, were also incorporated into this chain of Egyptian bases (see note 8, on Tell es-Sultan).

The extension of Egyptian authority east along Naḥal Besor should probably be seen in connection with the road system leading to Transjordan, the Arabah, and the copper mines at Timna^c, all of which the Egyptians exploited during this period. Tell Jemmeh, Tell el-Far^cah (S), and perhaps Tel Masos, where a Ramesside scarab was

found (Giveon 1974), were probably stations along this route.

Merneptah (1212–1202 B.C.) carried out a further step in the Egyptian expansion in southern Palestine. After the relative stagnation in Egyptian foreign policy in the last decades of Ramses II's rule (Stadelmann 1981), it again became necessary to secure the international routes in Canaan by further annexations to the centrally governed territories.

In his fifth year, Merneptah led a military campaign to Canaan, which is documented in the "Israel Stela" (Pritchard 1955: 377). The operation, in the wake of which Ashkelon, Gezer, Yeno^cam, and Israel were defeated, may also have pictorial representation in a relief from Karnak that was formerly attributed to Ramses II (Wreszinski 1935: pls. 57–58; Keel 1975: 456; Yurco 1978: 70; Stager 1985: 61; cf. n. 6). The relief, only part of which is preserved, shows the conquest of three fortified towns and the defeat of a fourth enemy in the open field; Yurco identifies that enemy as Israel. Only the name of Ashkelon is preserved in the accompanying captions. The other two must be Gezer and Yeno^cam. The conquest of Gezer is also mentioned in the inscription of Merneptah from Amada, where he has the epithet "subduer of Gezer" (Kitchen 1981: 34; Wente *apud* Stager 1985: 62, n. 2).

Israel has naturally attracted the main scholarly attention (for a recent summary see Stager 1985; see also Na²aman 1977: 171); here, however, we shall concentrate on the geopolitical significance of the first two places in the list. Ashkelon and Gezer were probably the last Canaanite city-states on the southern section of the "Via Maris" that kept their autonomous status after Ramses II's extensive "Egyptianization" of the region. They both had a crucial place in the perpetuation of the Egyptian strategy.

Ashkelon commanded the coastal highway and was therefore able to block the Egyptian convoys traveling north from Gaza. To eliminate such a possibility, Merneptah conquered the city and turned the entire segment of the route connecting Gaza to Jaffa into a virtually Egyptian highway. Military strongholds and supply bases were located at more or less regular distances of ca. 20 km at Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Mahoz (see n. 8), Jaffa, and Aphek. In fact, that section of the Via Maris became a mere continuation of the Ways of Horus, which connected Egypt with Canaan along the northern coast of Sinai.

After its conquest Ashkelon was turned into an Egyptian stronghold. Alt (1944: 219) had already reached that conclusion on the basis of a hieroglyphic inscription on an ivory plaque from Megiddo (Pritchard 1955: 263). It mentions *Krkr*, the songstress of the god Ptah; Ptah carries, among other epithets, the title "the great ruler of Ashkelon." From this Alt assumed that a temple of the Egyptian deity Ptah was erected at Ashkelon, comparable to the temple of Amon erected by Ramses III in Gaza (see also Pritchard 1955: 263; cf., however, Helck 1971: 444; Weinstein 1981: 19). Such a step could only mean that the autonomous status of Ashkelon as a Canaanite city-state was abolished and the city came under Egyptian jurisdiction. Alt still hesitated to say whether this occurred in the reign of Ramses II or that of Merneptah,⁶ but the redating of the Karnak relief to Merneptah fixes the date (and *ipso facto* of the Megiddo ivory) to after 1207 B.C.

In the wake of Ashkelon's annexation, more places in its hinterland must have been turned into Egyptian posts. One such place could be Tel Šippor, a small cult center inhabited throughout the 13th to the 11th centuries (Biran 1978: 1111–13). In Stratum III, dated to the transition between the Bronze and the Iron Ages, a bronze figurine and a stone statuette executed in a mixed Egypto-Canaanite style were found.⁷

The conquest of Gezer, some distance from the main highway running along the coast, presumably had a double strategic significance for the Egyptians. West of Gezer was the small city-state of Mahoz,⁸ which probably was dominated by the powerful kingdom of Gezer (Na²aman 1975: 70, 78). As noted, the city is listed in the Amara inscription of Ramses II and one may assume that the Egyptians had an interest in keeping it under their control. The surest way to do that was by also commanding Gezer, the dominant city in the northern Shephelah. Without excavations, it is difficult to establish whether Mahoz was added to the chain of Egyptian forts already by Ramses II, or only by Merneptah, who completed the "Egyptianization" of the coastal highway between Gaza and Jaffa.

In addition to the takeover of the western domains of the kingdom of Gezer, which commanded an important segment of the coastal road, the Egyptians had another, equally important reason to liquidate the autonomous status of this powerful kingdom.⁹ Gezer dominated the main road from the Shephelah to the hill country; and

throughout history conquerors who wanted to control this latitudinal route felt compelled to take hold of the city and to fortify it.

An Egyptian interest in penetrating into the hill country around Jerusalem in this period is perhaps indicated in the Border Journal in Pap. Anastasi III from the third regnal year of Merneptah (Pritchard 1955: 258). There we have a record of the arrival of army commanders from the "Wells of Merneptah which are in the mountains." It was suggested that this name could refer to Biblical Me-nephtoah ("The Waters of Neph-toah") located at Lifta near Jerusalem.¹⁰ It appears that Merneptah not only consolidated his grip on the coastal road, but also attempted to impose Egyptian authority over parts of the inner hill country. His clash with the tribes of Israel (see Stager 1985: 59*–61* with further literature), which in this period were already established in the central hill country (see Kochavi 1985), should perhaps be understood in this context.

An additional aim of the Egyptian penetration into the central hill country may have been the necessity to open an alternative route to the north via the Jordan Valley towards Beth-shan and Yeno^cam. This possibly had become an urgent task because of security problems in the central section of the international highway running along the Sharon Plain. There is some archaeological evidence indicating that the Israelite settlement expanded into this territory at an early stage (Kochavi 1984: 32; Porath, Dar, and Applebaum 1985). Some evidence for an Egyptian presence in the central Jordan Valley was found in the sanctuary at Tell Deir ^cAlla, where excavators discovered a rare faience vase bearing the cartouche of Queen Tausert (Franken 1975: 322–23).

The full significance of the conquest of Gezer in Merneptah's military strategy is now evident. Domination of that city-state, which commands a vital crossroad of longitudinal and latitudinal routes, was imperative for any further advance of the Egyptian offensive. No wonder that from all his achievements in the campaign to Canaan Merneptah singled out in the Amada inscription the epithet "subduer of Gezer." The excavations at Tel Gezer have supplied evidence for the Egyptian conquest (Dever 1976: 439) and perhaps also for the subsequent Egyptian domination of the city.¹¹

The Border Journal in Pap. Anastasi III contains some evidence that Egyptian authority under Merneptah was not limited to the southern parts

of Canaan.¹² The journal records the passage of an emissary carrying a message to *Ba^cal-Trmg* the ruler of Tyre (v. 6:3) and the arrival of an Egyptian military official from "the city of Merneptah," which is in the region *p³ ʾrm* (v. 5:5). Without resorting to an unnecessary emendation to Amurru, this ethnicon probably refers to Arameans in the region of Damascus (Edel 1966: 28). If so, "the city of Merneptah" could refer to Damascus itself, which may have been turned into an Egyptian administrative center (Edel 1966: 29; Görg 1979: 10). Elsewhere in Pap. Anastasi III (v. 1:9) an Egyptian governor is mentioned who carries the exceptional title "the messenger of the king [to the rulers] of the foreign lands of Hurri from Tjaru to Upi."¹³ Does that title, as yet unparalleled in earlier documents,¹⁴ indicate that in this period all the Asiatic territories from Sile to Damascus were centrally governed by one Egyptian governor (see Singer 1983: 21, n. 31)? That would mean an essential change in the Egyptian administration of Canaan, which traditionally consisted of two (Na³aman 1975) or three (Helck 1971: 248; Weinstein 1981: 12) districts. If so, the change would further emphasize Merneptah's¹⁵ strategy of centralizing and tightening Egypt's grip on its Asiatic dependencies.

In the two decades between the end of Merneptah's reign (1212–1202 B.C.) and the beginning of Ramses III's (1182–1151 B.C.), Egypt had serious domestic problems and dynastic quarrels. There are no historical records on her rule in Asia. But despite the inner confusion, Egyptian presence in Canaan did not cease altogether. Store vessels with impressions of cartouches of Seti II (1199–1193 B.C.) were found at Tell el-Far^cah (S) and in the Egyptian garrison at Haruvit in northern Sinai (Goldwasser 1980: 34). The name of his widow, Queen Tausert (1193–1185 B.C.), appears on a faience vase from Tell Deir ^cAlla (Franken 1975) and on a scarab from Akko (M. Dothan 1981b: 111; 1985: 11). Seti II and Tausert are also represented at the mining centers at Serabit el-Khadim and Timna^c (Weinstein 1981: 22).

With the recovery of Egypt under Ramses III efforts to strengthen Egyptian rule in Canaan reached their climax. One of the significant developments in Egypt during that period was the unprecedented growth in the wealth and influence of the state temples. This growth of state temples is also evident in Egypt's Asiatic provinces. From the Great Papyrus Harris we learn that a temple

of Amon was erected in Ramses III's name at Gaza ("the city of Canaan") and the local population brought its taxes there (Pritchard 1955: 260). In addition, nine towns in Huru and Kush were consecrated to the god Amon (Pritchard 1955: 261, n. 5). The Egyptian temples at Beth-shan were also rebuilt during Ramses III's reign (Aharoni 1979: 267).

Most illustrative information on the collection of taxes in kind to Egyptian temples in Canaan was discovered in the excavations of Tel Sera^c and Lachish. Those cities probably became part of the Egyptian administrative system during this period.

At Tel Sera^c Stratum IX, dated to the first half of the 12th century B.C., a governor's residence was erected to serve the local Egyptian authorities (Oren 1984). Alongside local pottery characteristic of the transition between the Bronze and the Iron Ages, the residence also yielded a number of Egyptian vessels in pottery, alabaster and faience. The most significant find for establishing the date and the function of this public building is a group of Egyptian bowls with hieratic inscriptions mentioning large amounts of grain that were brought as taxes. One of the inscriptions has the date "Year 22," most probably in Ramses III's reign.¹⁶

The evidence from Tel Sera^c, in the western Negev some 25 km east of Gaza, shows that the Egyptian policy of annexation under Ramses III reached a new stage in its thrust east. Perhaps more places were included in the jurisdiction of Gaza during this last chapter of Egyptian expansionist strategy.

Lachish was the capital of an important city-state in the eastern Shephelah during the Amarna period (Na³aman 1975: 131-33). In Stratum VI on the tell, important finds were made in the new excavations (Ussishkin 1985); those finds indicate that the town was annexed to Egyptian jurisdiction under the rule of Ramses III. His name appears on a scarab and on a bronze object found in the area of the city gate (Ussishkin 1983). This metal plaque may have been nailed to the doors of the gate (Giveon 1983); if so, it is comparable to the Egyptian doorjamb inscriptions from Jaffa and Ashdod.

Bowls inscribed with administrative texts in hieratic (Goldwasser 1982), similar to those discovered at Tel Sera^c, provide ample evidence for Egyptian presence at Lachish. One of the inscriptions contains the term *šmw*, a harvest tax paid to

Egyptian religious institutions, and the date "Year 4." It was attributed in the past to Merneptah's reign (Tufnell 1958: 133). However, comparison with the bowls from Tel Sera^c and the new evidence from Lachish itself, including another bowl with the date "Year 10 + x" (Gilula 1976), leave no doubt that the hieratic bowls from Lachish date to Ramses III (Goldwasser 1982). To those Egyptian inscriptions should be added the two anthropoid coffins from Tomb 570, one of which carries a pseudo hieroglyphic inscription (Tufnell 1958: 36).

The inscribed bowls from Lachish were found out of context, but they should probably be related to the temple built on the summit of the tell in Stratum VI. A large number of similar but uninscribed bowls were found on its floors (Ussishkin 1985: 216). This temple, according to the latest ceramic analysis, was built in the 12th century after the Fosse Temple went out of use. It exhibits many distinct Egyptian features, both in architecture and in its finds. One inevitably reaches the conclusion that this temple was built during the Egyptian rule of the city and the "harvest tax" brought to it by the local inhabitants was consecrated to the Egyptian religious administration.

It is logical to assume that at Lachish, as in other places the Egyptians annexed, they erected a "governor's residence." However, if one did exist, it has not been found yet; its remains are concealed under the Israelite palaces on the summit of the tell.¹⁷

Other places in the kingdom of Lachish probably also came under Egyptian jurisdiction in this period. One such place could be Tell Ḥesi on Naḥal Shiqmah (see Wright 1971). Bliss excavated a large Egyptian-type public building dated to the end of the Late Bronze Age (see Oren 1984). The town was destroyed sometime during the 12th century B.C. and was only resettled in the tenth century. As at nearby Lachish, Philistine pottery is almost completely absent at Tell Ḥesi.

To complete this survey on Egyptian expansionism we should mention another important site in the eastern Shephelah, on which our information is unfortunately very limited: Tell eš-Safi, identified as Gath of the Philistines (Rainey 1975, with previous literature). The town was the capital of an important city-state in the Amarna period (Na³aman 1979: 676-84). It bordered on the kingdoms of Gezer in the north, Jerusalem in the east,

Lachish in the south, and Ashkelon in the west. Bliss and Macalister conducted excavations on a small scale at the end of the last century, but their material was not published satisfactorily (see Stern 1978: 1024–27). Nevertheless, several important finds provide some hints on the history of the site.

From the excavation and from chance finds on the surface of the tell, numerous scarabs are known, which date from the Hyksos period to Ramses IV (Giveon 1978: 99–104). A Roman(!) burial cave contained a cylinder-seal depicting the god Seth, identified by his Egyptian epithet, fighting a lion (Giveon 1978: 97–98). The most important Egyptian find as yet at Tell eṣ-Ṣafi is a fragment of a stele (Bliss and Macalister 1902: 42, 106, 152, fig. 21; Giveon 1978: 103). The rare Egyptian stelae (or rock stelae) in Palestine were all found at sites that have clear Egyptian connections, such as Beth-shan, Megiddo, Tel Kinneret, and Timna^c (Weinstein 1981). Thus, the stele from Tell eṣ-Ṣafi must indicate some permanent Egyptian presence, perhaps an Egyptian garrison erected at the site after its annexation to Egypt.

The fact that Gath, like Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ashdod, turned into a major Philistine city suggests an Egyptian presence beforehand. As for Ekron (Khirbet el-Muqanna^c), some 9 km north of Gath, one eagerly awaits the results of the current excavations; it has already become evident that the site was settled in the Late Bronze Age and was not founded by the Philistines as was previously thought (Dothan and Gitin 1982; 1983).

We have no evidence to establish the date of Gath's annexation, but we may not be too wrong if we assume that it happened during Ramses III's reign, more or less at the same time as the annexation of the kingdom of Lachish. A less plausible alternative would be that the kingdom of Gath was already annexed by Merneptah, together with Ashkelon and Gezer, although that is not mentioned in the "Israel Stele." Only stratigraphic excavations at this important site would decide the issue.

With the liquidation of the last two autonomous city-states in the Shephelah the process of "Egyptianizing" the southern coastal plain of

Palestine was complete. The Egyptians had only two government bases at the beginning of the process, but by the end of Ramses III's reign they held a vast territory, extending from the Yarkon River¹⁸ to the border of Sinai and from the sea to the Judaeen foothills.

The Egyptian offensive in Canaan was primarily motivated by the growing menace from tribal elements who gradually settled the central hill country and the northern Negev. This is especially evident in the policies of Merneptah and Ramses III, who expanded Egyptian jurisdiction as deep as the eastern limits of the Shephelah, at a considerable distance from the main coastal highway. Settling Philistines in Egyptian bases along the coast after Ramses III's eighth year was another facet of the same policy, intended to establish a strong bulwark against the new elements in the hill country who posed a growing threat to the stability of the imperial rule (Singer 1985).

The economic factor, particularly the collection of large amounts of grain in taxes directed to Egyptian religious institutions, also played a major role in the Egyptian policy in the last decades of their rule in Canaan. This has to be viewed in the general context of the food shortage that affected large parts of western Asia at the start of the 12th century B.C.

The last years of the Egyptian presence in Canaan, after Ramses III's energetic rule, are completely obscure. There are no historical records and the Egyptian finds in Palestine gradually lessen until they finally disappear in the last third of the 12th century B.C. It is customary to mark the end of the Egyptian rule with Ramses VI (1141–1133 B.C.), whose name was found at Megiddo on a bronze base for a statue (Weinstein 1981: 23; cf. Helck 1971: 234). The mining activities in Sinai and Timna^c also seem to have lasted until this period, and the same applies to the Egyptian necropolis at Deir el-Balah (references in Weinstein 1981: 23). There is sporadic occurrence of scarabs and small objects which date even later,¹⁹ but they should hardly be attributed any political significance. The stage was clear now for the ensuing struggle between the Philistines and the Israelites over the inheritance of the Egyptian empire in Canaan.

NOTES

¹Mazar (1975: 156 and n. 9) restored the missing name as Yurza or Ashdod. However, in both the Amara and the Soleb lists a medial *n* is still preserved from the name. The lists do not follow a strict geographical order; Ashkelon, for instance, appears elsewhere in the Soleb list.

²Except for the 11th century Onomasticon of Amenemope (Gardiner 1947: 191). For Ashdod in the texts of Ugarit see Astour (1970).

³The title "fan bearer on the right of the king" which appears on the inscription is an honorific epithet of highest officials in Egypt, such as the Vizier, the First Herald and the King's Son of Kush (Gardiner 1947: 23; Edel 1953: 57, n. 5). The epithet also appears among the titles of several Egyptian governors who served in Canaan: Ḥwy/Ḥaya under Ramses II (Singer 1983: 18), Amenemope under Merneptah (Pap. Anastasi III v. 1:9), and the "messenger of the king to Syria and Nubia" (name not preserved) who served under Siptah (MacIver and Woolley 1911: 32; n. 14 below).

⁴I am indebted to A. Schulman, who studied the fragment, for the following information: "The clenched hand and wrist-length, fringed sleeve of a larger than life size statue of a female, either a goddess or a queen. On the back of the handkerchief, which the fist holds, and on the bracelet on its wrist are the nomen and prenomen of Ramses II. Since Egyptian monumental sculpture did not stand in isolation, it seems clear that the statue originally stood within the precincts of a major Egyptian installation."

⁵Tell el-^cAjjul (Sharuhén), 7 km south of Gaza, is excluded from this discussion, since the city had been held by the Egyptians from the beginning of the 18th Dynasty. There is some evidence for the continuation of Egyptian presence at the site after the government headquarters had been transferred from Sharuhén to Gaza (Gonen 1981).

⁶Alt (1944: 225, n. 3) felt uneasy about the double conquest of Ashkelon, by Ramses II and by Merneptah. He tended to solve the problem by assuming that Merneptah may have "usurped" some of his predecessors' victories. For a similar view see Redford (in press) who attempts to refute Yurco's redating of the Karnak relief.

⁷Is it merely coincidental that a scarab depicting Ptah seated on a stool was found in Stratum I (Biran 1978: 1112), or could this find point to some relationship between Tel Šippor and Ashkelon, where a temple of Ptah was erected?

⁸This is usually identified with Tell es-Sultan on Naḥal Sorek in the vicinity of Yavneh (Alt 1944: 13; Mazar 1975: 156). The site has not yet been excavated, but rich Middle and Late Bronze Age tombs were discovered nearby (Gophna 1978: 1113-14). The port of this city was probably located at Minat Rubin (Yavneh Yam) south of the mouth of Naḥal Sorek (Kaplan 1978:

1216; Raban and Galili 1985: 392).

⁹For the kingdom of Gezer in the Amarna Age see Na³aman 1975: 58-87, with further bibliography. For the fate of this kingdom in the 12th and 11th centuries B.C. see Singer 1985.

¹⁰For some interesting Egyptian finds of cultic character found in the St. Etienne monastery in Jerusalem, see Barkay 1980. They are tentatively dated to the 19th Dynasty.

¹¹See Singer 1986, with the suggestion that one of the public buildings excavated by Macalister (at the northern end of Trenches 14-16 in the plan of the "Third Semitic Period") is in fact an Egyptian "governor's residence."

¹²The last contacts between Egypt and the Hittite Empire are dated to Merneptah (Ottén 1983: 15, with references).

¹³See Edel 1953: 58. For the "messengers," see Valloggia 1976. For the equation between the Egyptian title "messenger of the king to all foreign lands" (*jpwtj nsw r ḥ3st nbt*) and the Akkadian title *šakin māti/rabišu*, "governor," see Edel 1953: 56; Singer 1983: 20).

¹⁴A similar title is attested on a relief from Buhen dated to Siptah (MacIver and Woolley 1911: 32). The official, whose name is missing, carries the titles "fan bearer on the right of the king" and "messenger of the king to Hurri and Kush" (*jpwtj nsw r Ḥ Kš*).

¹⁵In Ramses II's 34th year Canaan was still ruled by (at least) two Egyptian governors (Edel 1953: 60; Singer 1983: 21).

¹⁶Goldwasser 1984. Bietak 1985: 219, n. 7, does not accept Goldwasser's dating, which was established on the basis of a palaeographic analysis. Bietak suggests a Ramses II dating of this inscription. Bietak's objection, however, is influenced by his general view that Ramses III's war against the Sea Peoples took place in the eastern Nile delta after Canaan had already been lost to the Egyptians (Bietak 1985: 218). Against this view see Singer (1985: 109 n. 1).

¹⁷Starkey reached a large brick building of Level VI, underneath the corners of the Iron Age fort. The burnt destruction level contained Ramesside sherds and many fragments of alabaster and faience vases (Tufnell 1953: 77, pl. 16:6).

¹⁸It is beyond the scope of this article to examine the Egyptian policy toward the territories extending north of the Yarkon River. It is not impossible that similar military and administrative measures were also taken along other sections of the international highway, in the Sharon plain for example. However, we still do not have sufficient evidence to clarify those issues.

¹⁹At Gezer a scarab of Ramses VIII and an enamel inlay with the cartouche of Ramses IX were found (T. Dothan 1982: 52, n. 153); in tombs at Tell el-Far^cah scarabs of Ramses VIII and Ramses X were found (T. Dothan 1982: 29 n. 50; 30 n. 59).

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