



**“THERE’S NO PLACE LIKE HOME”? REPRESENTING TRAVEL AND RETURN  
FROM THE OLD TO THE MIDDLE KINGDOM**

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**ABSTRACT**

The representation of travel beyond the established borders of Egypt has been conceived as one of many markers of literary fictionality. One of the few texts that showcase this is the Middle Kingdom Tale of Sinuhe. Many have examined the Tale’s literary qualities through its portrayal of characters and activities associated with border traversal. But how novel was its representation of travel to the northeast? This paper focuses on travel and travellers as portrayed mainly in Old to Middle Kingdom textual material relating to Egyptian-Near Eastern relations. Examining similarities and differences across time, it questions whether Old Kingdom transregional agents and activities, as well as their representations, influenced the emergence of tropes on transborder movement. It also discusses how periods of increased long-distance connectivity may have shifted concepts of travel, likely contributing to an emphasis on the pertinence of a safe return to Egypt.

**KEYWORDS**

Old Kingdom; Middle Kingdom; Egypt, Levant; Western Asia; travel; transregionalism; Sinuhe

**INTRODUCTION**

The Tale of Sinuhe is among the most well-known cultural artifacts of the Middle Kingdom. Several linguistic and literary analyses of this text have been written, including its representation of Egyptian and Levantine society, culture, and politics. This paper adds to a handful of other studies exploring its representation of travel.<sup>1</sup> It offers a brief preliminary yet theoretically informed exploration into whether and how records of transregional agents and activities from the Old to the Middle Kingdom influenced the emergence of motifs on travel and cross-border movements. The focus is on the portrayal of travel from Egypt to Western Asia, including the Sinai Peninsula. Material on travel to the Eastern Desert, the Red Sea coast, and other regions of Africa is not included, nor is that concerning non-Egyptians

traveling to the Nile Valley, albeit these topics are of interest for further research.

The term ‘transregionalism’ and its derivatives are utilized here to refer to aspects of ‘transnationalism,’ or the processes of sustaining social existences, reproductions, and relations of individuals and groups involved in various facets of border crossing.<sup>2</sup> While transnationalism typically focuses on non-state actors and activities, incorporating those tied to the state is necessary when examining Old and Middle Kingdom Egyptian agents and activities.<sup>3</sup> This is due to the nature of the preserved evidence, most of which concerns the upper echelons of society, and the consequent apparent high degree of connectedness between state and non-state actors and activities. To facilitate the latter, shared physical and social spaces were likely employed, including

those that offered the required infrastructure, such as routes or harbors, or the required resources and social ties, such as cultic or administrative institutions.<sup>4</sup> Examples of these are preserved in the Tale of Sinuhe.

In short, the Tale of Sinuhe presents a first-person account of Sinuhe, an *ir.y-p<sup>c</sup>.t h3.ty-<sup>c</sup> s3b <sup>c</sup>d-mr d3t.t ity m t3.w St.tyw* "hereditary prince, count, dignitary, administrator of the sovereign's estates of the lands in the *St.tyw*," as he travels to and from the Levant.<sup>5</sup> The text covers his flight from Egypt, purportedly after hearing about the attempted assassination of the pharaoh Amenemhat I. It then describes his seemingly aimless movements across the Egyptian border to the Levant, where he takes refuge. Eventually, and within the discretion of a Levantine ruler of Upper *Rtnw*, Ammunenshi,<sup>6</sup> Sinuhe himself became a ruler of a land called *Ṭ33*. Then, after several achievements, he returned to Egypt at the behest of the succeeding pharaoh, Senwosret I, who granted him a burial befitting for a highly respected member of society in Egypt.

As the most frequently attested composition of the pharaonic period, the fictional Tale of Sinuhe has survived on at least five papyri from the Middle Kingdom and over 30 papyri and ostraca from the New Kingdom.<sup>7</sup> The earliest surviving copy thus far known is Papyrus Berlin 3022 (B), which can be assigned to the second half of Dynasty 12.<sup>8</sup> It was purchased along with other Middle Kingdom texts believed to have been composed around the reign of Amenemhat III.<sup>9</sup> Due to its degree of preservation, it is thought to have been retrieved from a Theban burial.<sup>10</sup> The second major copy is Papyrus Berlin 10499 (R), with the Tale of Sinuhe on its verso and that of The Eloquent Peasant on its recto. It was found with other artifacts and papyri with magico-medical, literary, administrative, and instructional texts.<sup>11</sup> All were placed in a box and deposited in a late Middle Kingdom burial located beneath the Ramesseum of Thebes.<sup>12</sup> The association of both papyri with such a variety of texts insinuates a connection with learned, literate readers, or at least individuals who appreciated the value of the written word.

The Tale also displays, to varying degrees, several literary aspects that parallel those of the other texts with which it was discovered. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that the Tale incorporates various genres,<sup>13</sup> displaying intertextuality as part of a dynamic so-called 'universe of texts.'<sup>14</sup> From beginning to end, the Tale is framed as a biography,

a genre that seems to have emerged by the Fifth Dynasty in the funerary sphere.<sup>15</sup> This self-portrait offered a means to present achievement, whether of the expected social obligations of a respected member of Egyptian society and/or involvement in significant, illustrious events typically commissioned by the pharaoh.<sup>16</sup> Bearing in mind that the surviving material remains incomplete, some Old and Middle Kingdom biographies embrace aspects from other literary forms or styles, such as letters<sup>17</sup> or the use of direct speech.<sup>18</sup> These provide glimpses of a corpus of texts that could have offered antecedents or a "cognate forerunner," as Baines suggests, to Middle Kingdom narratives, such as that of Sinuhe.<sup>19</sup> Biographies also offer insights into decorum, social experience and social relations through their representation of entities, repeated motifs and/or clichés.<sup>20</sup> Examples of the latter include mention of Sinuhe giving water to the thirsty (line B96), as attested in Old and Middle Kingdom biographies,<sup>21</sup> or hosting passers-by and directing travellers (lines B95-97), as in First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom attestations.<sup>22</sup>

By the Sixth Dynasty, the use of different genres, styles, motifs, and clichés also emerge in additional types of texts. Significant here is that of the expedition inscription, which offered officials further opportunities for self-presentation. For example, the Sixth Dynasty Graffito of Anusu at Bir Mueilha in the Eastern Desert mentions that he gave water to the thirsty and bread to the hungry,<sup>23</sup> while the Twelfth Dynasty inscription of Horwerra at Serabit el-Khadim adds direct speech.<sup>24</sup> This development highlights the links between commemorating achievements in funerary or sacred places within officials' communities and commemorating expedition experiences as achievements in distant places, some of which could also be sacred.

In both contexts, self-presentation still largely remained in line with decorum. However, in the Middle Kingdom, such precepts could be subverted or questioned in less normative works, which may today be considered 'fictional' or 'literary' narratives.<sup>25</sup> As with the Tale of Sinuhe, these could be framed in a particular style or variably employ different genres but could also add self-referentiality, narrative structure, character development, use third-person narration, and include unfavorable events.<sup>26</sup> With regard to this paper's topic, some identify the use of an established 'travel/traveling abroad' motif of narrative fiction in the Tale,<sup>27</sup>

DYN.	REIGN	INDIVIDUAL	FINDSPOT(S)	LOCATION(S) REACHED IN WESTERN ASIA	REFERENCE(S)
6	Teti–Merenra	Weni	Façade(?), tombs, Abydos and Saqqara	<i>Sb3-n.y-Tyi-m-htp; W<sup>c</sup>r.t-n.t-Hr.w-nb-m3<sup>c</sup>.t</i> ; land of the <i>Hr.yw-š<sup>c</sup>; Šr.t-tp-wnd.w</i>	<i>Urk.</i> I, 98–110; Collombert 2015
	Pepy I(?)	Khnumhotep	Pillar in chapel, tomb of Khui (QH34e), Qubbet el-Hawa	<i>Kbn</i>	<i>Urk.</i> I, 140–141; Espinel 2004, 15–18; Edel, Seyfried and Vieler 2007, 467
	Pepy I–II	Iny	(?)	<i>‘m33w; Hnty-š; P3ws[...]; Kbn</i>	Marcolin and Espinel 2011
	Pepy II	Pepynakht-Heqaib	Chapel, tomb QH35, Qubbet el-Hawa	Foreign land of the <i>‘3m.w</i>	<i>Urk.</i> I, 131–135
11	Mentuhotep II	Henenu	Vestibule, tomb TT313, Deir el-Bahri	Foreign land of the <i>Hr.yw-š<sup>c</sup> (?)</i> ; <i>H[tyw]-š<sup>c</sup></i>	Hayes 1949
11–12	(?)	Khety	Tomb 65, Asasif	<i>Bi3.w</i> ; foreign lands of <i>Tnht</i> ; <i>pr.w-Hr.w-n(.y)-h.t-[mfk3.t]</i> ; <i>pr.w-šm3; ht.t-Hr.w</i>	Gardiner 1917, 33–35; Schenkel 1965, 283–284 [Nr. 477]
12	Senwosret III	Khusobek	Tomb 11, Cemetery E, Abydos	<i>St.t; Skmm; Rtnw</i>	Garstang 1901; Peet 1914; Baines 1987; Goedicke 1998
		Khnumhotep (III)	Façade, tomb, Dahshur	<i>Kbny</i> ; <i>[Rtnw]</i> ; possibly <i>W3ti</i> and <i>[Rm]nn</i>	Allen 2008

TABLE 1: Biographical texts from the Old to the Middle Kingdom that mention travel to one or more destinations in Western Asia.

with Moers recognizing it among a select number of ‘travel narratives’ that embrace concepts and perhaps precepts regarding social and physical border transgression.<sup>28</sup> With this in mind, the next section discusses extant representations of travel from the Old to the Middle Kingdom and explores whether Old Kingdom transregional agents and activities, as well as their representations, influenced the emergence of this travel motif and tropes on trans-border movements and foreign entities.

## REPRESENTING TRAVEL TO WESTERN ASIA

### EXTANT TEXTS

A limited but significant number of texts from different contexts and of various styles include the motif of travel to or from Western Asia. These may offer some insight into the existing ‘universe of texts’ or cultural repertoire that could have inspired later works concerned with transregional agents and activities. Excluding texts mentioning toponyms of unverified locations, the compositions may be heuristically categorized into biographical, expeditionary, literary, or administrative texts.

The surviving biographical texts from the Old and Middle Kingdoms that specifically refer to travel to Western Asia date to the 6th, 11th and 12th Dynasties (Table 1). Those of the Sixth Dynasty include the inscriptions of Weni from his tombs at Saqqara and Abydos, describing activities conducted during the reigns of Teti to Merenra; the likely early Sixth Dynasty text of Khnumhotep, as preserved in the tomb of Khui at Qubbet el-Hawa, near Aswan; the biography of Ini, mentioning expeditions organized from the reigns of Pepy I to II; and the biography of Pepynakht-Heqaib from his tomb at Qubbet el-Hawa detailing an expedition during the reign of Pepy II. From the Eleventh Dynasty are the Theban texts of Henenu, dated to Mentuhotep II’s reign, and that of Khety, possibly of the late Eleventh Dynasty. Dating to the Twelfth Dynasty are two texts assigned to the reign of Senwosret III: the biography of Khnumhotep III from a tomb at Dahshur, and the stela of Khusobek at Abydos.

Concerning expedition inscriptions, all those from the Old and Middle Kingdom attested in the Sinai Peninsula and mentioning the Egyptian administration may conceivably be regarded as the

DYN.	REIGN	FINDSPOT(S)	NR.*	EXPEDITION LEADER	EXPRESSION(S)	REFERENCE(S)
5	Menkauhor	Wadi Maghara	12	[Not preserved]	<i>wp.t iri.t in [...]</i> “expedition performed by [...]”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 7; Černý 1955, 60
	Djedkara-Isesi	Wadi Maghara	13	Neankh-khentykhtay	<i>wp.t nsw.t h3b hn<sup>c</sup>...</i> “royal expedition sent with [...]”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 7; Černý 1955, 60–61
			14	[Not preserved]	<i>wp.t nsw.t h[3b] ...</i> “royal expedition [sent] [...]”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 8; Černý 1955, 61–62
			15	[Not preserved]	<i>wp.t iri.t in ...</i> “expedition performed by [...]”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 4; Černý 1955, 62
			19	Sobekhotep(?)	<i>wp.t iri.t in [...]</i> “expedition performed by [...]”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 9; Černý 1955, 65
6	Pepy I	Wadi Maghara	16	Meryra-ankh	<i>wp.t iri.t in ...</i> “expedition performed by [...]”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 8; Černý 1955, 62–63
	Pepy II	Wadi Maghara	17	Hepy	<i>wp.t nsw.t h3b.t hn<sup>c</sup>...</i> “royal expedition which was sent with [...]”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 9; Černý 1955, 64
12	Amenemhat III	Wadi Maghara	23	Khentykhety-hotep-Khnumsu	<i>m3<sup>c</sup>... r ini.t mfk3.t hsmn...</i> “dispatched... to bring turquoise and copper...”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 10; Černý 1955, 66–67
			25	Hornakht	<i>iw d3.n=(i) nnw hr šps.w m wp.t Hr.w ...</i> “I traversed the <i>nn</i> -water laden with precious things on the mission of Horus [...]”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 10; Černý 1955, 68
		Serabit el-Khadim	53	Sobek-herhab	<i>iyi.n hmw.t mh.t r-dr=sn ...</i> “the craftsmen arrived in their full whole...”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 17; Černý 1955, 79–80
			54	Ptahwer	<i>ini dr.w h3s.wt... hbhb in.wt št3. wt ini ph.w tmm.t rh</i> “reaching the boundaries of the foreign lands ... traversing the mysterious valleys, reaching the total end of the unknown”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 18; Černý 1955, 80
			86	Ini	<i>m3<sup>c</sup> hm=f ...</i> “his majesty dispatched...”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 26; Černý 1955, 94
			87	Si-Inpu	<i>i[yi...] mh r-dr=sn</i> “[...] arrived] in their full whole”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 24; Černý 1955, 95
			90	Horwerra	<i>m3<sup>c</sup> hm=f... r bi3 pn spr t3 pn m 3bd 3 pr.t...</i> “his majesty dispatched... to this mining area. This land was reached in month 3 of <i>pr.t</i> [...]”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pls. 25A, 26; Černý 1955, 97–99
			91	Sneferu	<i>[k3b.n]=i iyi nb r st tn</i> “I [doubled] any travel to this place”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 33A; Černý 1955, 99
			92	Kemsu(?)	<i>im.w rn n(.y) d3d3.t=f iyi.t hn<sup>c</sup>=f...</i> “name list of his company who came with him [...]”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 27; Černý 1955, 100
			115	Renef-Inpu	<i>[iyi.n=f] m htp hn<sup>c</sup> m3<sup>c</sup>[=f]</i> “[he arrived] in peace with his expedition”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 39; Černý 1955, 118–119
			117	[Not preserved]	<i>rh.t m3<sup>c</sup> iyi(.w) r bi3 pn</i> “list of the expedition which came to this mining area”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 40; Černý 1955, 121

TABLE 2: Expedition texts from the Old to the Middle Kingdom (MK) mentioning the arrival or dispatch of expeditions and other travel-specific expressions. Inscription Numbers (\*) accord to Gardiner and Peet 1952; Černý 1955.

DYN.	REIGN	FINDSPOT(S)	NR.*	EXPEDITION LEADER	EXPRESSION(S)	REFERENCE(S)
(MK)	[Uncertain]	Serabit el-Khadim	140	Sneferu	<i>īyi=i ḥmw.t [mḥ.t r]-dr=sn</i> ... “my craftsmen arrived in their full whole...”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 51; Černý 1955, 138–139
			141	Amenemhat	<i>mꜣꜥ ḥm n(y) nṯr pn</i> ... “the majesty of this god dispatched...”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 52; Černý 1955, 139–140
			411	Khetysenbem	[...] <i>sbi.t</i> [...] <i>wḏ.yt nb.t r St.t r ini.t</i> ... “[...] travel [...] every expedition to <i>St.t</i> to bring...”	Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 86; Černý 1955, 208

TABLE 2: (cont.) Expedition texts from the Old to the Middle Kingdom (MK) mentioning the arrival or dispatch of expeditions and other travel-specific expressions.

DATE	TEXT	MAIN COPY(IES)	LOCATION(S) MENTIONED IN WESTERN ASIA	REFERENCE
MK	Tale of Sinuhe	Papyrus Berlin 3022 Papyrus Berlin 10499	<i>Ptn; Kmwr; Kp(n); Kdm; (R)mw (hr.t); T33; Ḥnty-kšw; lands of the Fnh.w</i>	Koch 1990
	Satire of Trades	Papyrus Sallier II	-	Helck 1970
MK?	Admonitions of Ipuwer	Papyrus Leiden I.344	[ <i>Kp</i> ]ny	Enmarch 2005

TABLE 3: ‘Literary’ texts of the Middle Kingdom (MK) mentioning travel or the lack thereof to one or more destinations in Western Asia.

product of travelers. Those selected for this analysis and listed in Table 2 specifically note aspects of travel to or from different sites in the Sinai Peninsula, including mention of expeditions sent by the king. The table excludes inscriptions with wishes to return home.<sup>29</sup> Texts dating from the Old Kingdom refer to travel to Wadi Maghara and are assigned to the reigns of Djedkara-Isesi, Pepy I, and Pepy II, where preserved. Those from the Middle Kingdom are mostly attested at Serabit el-Khadim, with a few examples from Wadi Maghara. Inscriptions retaining regnal dates or names are predominantly assigned to the reign of Amenemhat III.

A small number of literary texts also represent aspects of travel (Table 3). Apart from the Tale of Sinuhe, these are all preserved on New Kingdom papyri. They include the Teaching of Duaf’s son Khety or the so-called Satire of Trades and the Admonitions of Ipuwer.

Another text from the Middle Kingdom, the Daybook of Amenemhat II, provides an entirely different perspective. It records the administrative dispatch of expeditions to different locales believed to be in Western Asia.<sup>30</sup>

#### THE OLD KINGDOM

Each journey typically comprises a motivation, a voyage, and a destination. The extant texts from the Sixth to the Twelfth Dynasties represent travel as

a movement *toward* a distant location and/or as a *return* from this location. When mentioned in Sixth and Twelfth Dynasty biographical and expedition inscriptions, motivations for travel to Western Asia are always tied to a royal commission.

This is clearly represented in the first known detailed description of travel to Western Asia, preserved in the biography of Weni from his tombs at Abydos and Saqqara.<sup>31</sup> As is apparent from the Abydos version, the text was likely presented on the façade of the tomb.<sup>32</sup> It first describes Weni’s duties under king Teti, followed by his exceptional achievements and the privileges granted to him under Pepy I’s reign. When Pepy I “took action against the *ꜣm.w Ḥr.yw-šꜥ*,”<sup>33</sup> he placed Weni, then an *im.y-r3 ḥn.tyw-š pr 3* “overseer of guards of the Great House,”<sup>34</sup> at the front of a sizeable coalition of officials of various ranks and troops of diverse origin (lines 13–19). The biography then describes how Weni planned and led them on a clearly defined route, likely to the Sinai Peninsula (lines 21–22):<sup>35</sup> “to the Northern Island (*iw-mḥ.ty*)<sup>36</sup> then to the Gate of Imhotep (*Sb3-n.y-tyi-m-ḥtp*)<sup>37</sup> and to the District of Horus Lord of Truth (*Wꜣr.t-n.t-Ḥr.w-nb-m3ꜥ.t*).”<sup>38</sup> The so-called Song of Victory follows, emphasizing the army’s achievements in returning safely (*īyi.n mšꜥ pn m ḥtp*) after destroying and flattening the land of the *Ḥr.yw-šꜥ* (lines 22–28). It mentions tearing down its forts, cutting its figs and vines, setting it to fire,



killing its thousands of troops, and bringing some back as captives. Five times the *Hr.yw-š*<sup>c</sup> rebelled, so five times Weni successfully led the coalition. The text also describes another campaign for which Weni led his troops over sea and land to quash a rebellion at the elusive Nose of Gazelle’s Head (*Šr.t-tp-wnd.w*),<sup>39</sup> again returning with success (lines 29–32). It continues with other achievements Weni completed for Merenra, this time while he held the title of *h3.ty-š im.y-r3 šm<sup>c</sup>.w* “count, overseer of Upper Egypt.”<sup>40</sup> Although such royal privileges for an individual of seemingly modest rank may appear peculiar, they are not unique.<sup>41</sup> Yet, in Weni’s case, his tomb indeed contains evidence of his promotion to the office of vizier.<sup>42</sup> This adds to extra-biographical material that attests to the individual’s high position in Egyptian society, with links to a powerful family in Abydos, possible ties with the capital, and access to interregional trade networks.<sup>43</sup> These ties, however, are not emphasized in the description of Weni’s experiences as an expedition leader. Instead, his accomplishments in planning the expeditions and leading the troops across the routes are highlighted, as is the return in safety.

During the same reign as Weni’s campaigns against the *ʿ3m.w Hr.yw-š<sup>c</sup>*, Khnumhotep and Iny were sent to the Levant. The text of the *hṛp sh* “director of the dining-hall”<sup>44</sup> Khnumhotep merely mentions that he went forth to Byblos with Tjeiti and to Punt with Khui an unpreserved number of times and that he returned successfully (*iyi.k(i) m htp*).<sup>45</sup> Limited in length, the inclusion of this first-person account in another individual’s tomb showcases both the importance of such expeditions for all those involved, as well as the significance of noting return from travel to distant lands.<sup>46</sup>

In contrast, the biography of Iny provides hints as to the motivation for such travel. As reconstructed by Marcolin and Espinel, the biography is preserved on both a large and minor inscription.<sup>47</sup> According to the large inscription, Iny is described as one valued before Djedkara-Isesi (line x+2). His special treatment eventuated in Iny’s ascription with a new name, *Inn(.w)-df3.w*, literally “the one who brings provisions” (line x+4).<sup>48</sup> It was likely also associated with Iny’s involvement in six campaigns to Western Asia. Four were conducted during the reign of Pepy I to *ʿm33w*, *Hnty-š* and *P3ws*[...], from which Iny brought back silver and every good produce (*inw*) (lines x+5–6). One expedition was sent to Byblos under the reign of Merenra, and returned

with *Kbn.wt* “Byblos-type boats”, alongside desired commodities from a range of sources, including lapis lazuli, lead/tin, silver, *sft*-oil, and every good product (lines x+7–9). For his achievements in this campaign, Iny was praised, specifically in the court, and rewarded with gold (lines x+9–10). The minor inscription mentions the last campaign sent to *Hnty-š* during Pepy II’s reign, from which one *Kbn.t* “Byblos-type boat” and a number of cargo boats were sent to Egypt alongside silver as well as *ʿ3m* men and women (lines x+2–4). Consequently, Iny was ushered to the court, had conferred upon him the titles *smr w<sup>c</sup>.ty hr.y-hb sd3.wty-ntr* “sole companion, lector priest, god’s sealer,”<sup>49</sup> and was honored by eating a meal at the court (lines x+5–7). Regarding the path of the voyage, only one detail in the large inscription notes that Iny descended to Byblos from *R3-h3.t*, after which it is directly mentioned that he returned safely (*iyi.k(i) im m htp*; line x+10–11).

The importance of the safe return is all the more evident in the last Old Kingdom biographical text dealing with travel to Western Asia: the biography of Pepynakht-Heqaib.<sup>50</sup> According to his epithets, this official was *inn(.w) hr.t h3s.wt n nb=f* “one who brings the products of foreign lands to his lord”<sup>51</sup> and *dd(.w) nrw Hr.w m h3s.wt* “one who instils the fear of Horus in the foreign lands.”<sup>52</sup> He is represented as an experienced expedition leader, already having mounted a campaign to *W3w3t* and *Trtt* in Nubia prior to his journey to the foreign land of the *ʿ3m.w*. Pepynakht-Heqaib was sent to the latter to bring back the body of the official Anankhti, who had been constructing a *Kbn.t* “Byblos-type boat” when he was attacked by *ʿ3m.w n.w Hr.yw-š* (lines 11–12). The exact location of the campaign is not given, as it was likely not considered the target of the voyage. Instead, the actual target was the murderers, rather than all *ʿ3m.w*, who were successfully driven away by the official (line 15).

All in all, Old Kingdom representations of travel effectively showcase officials’ achievements and affiliation with the ruling pharaohs. Framed by decorum, missions were evidently all commissioned by the state, as indeed corroborated by the preserved expedition inscriptions at Wadi Maghara noting travel by officials. Both Iny and Weni were portrayed as specially chosen by the king for the expeditions, while at least Weni may have also been in the king’s personal service as “overseer of guards of the Great House.” Any privileges acquired due to connections to powerful families, who in Weni’s

case were in very strategically positioned towns, are not attested. The officials’ conduct beyond borders were as representatives of the king. Thus, they could ‘instill the fear’ of the ruling pharaoh in these regions. Mentions of paths leading away from Egypt are immediately followed by expressions noting safe returns, while destinations are framed in association with the purposes of the campaigns. The latter were either of bellicose nature, targeting rebellious *ʕm.w* *Hr.yw-š*<sup>c</sup>; or of commercial nature, bringing back desired commodities and individuals, likely for their specialized skills. Mention of direct personal encounters with foreigners is absent. As rewards, officials could be welcomed at the court before the king, promoted, and, in Iny’s case, presented with gold.

#### THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

Some of these aspects continue to be attested in preserved early Middle Kingdom texts noting travel to Western Asia. Two assigned to the late Eleventh Dynasty remain, both from Thebes. One was collected in fragments from the vestibule of Theban Tomb 313 at Deir el-Bahri and is dated to the reign of Mentuhotep II.<sup>53</sup> It records how the *im.y-r3 pr.w ʕ* “chief steward”<sup>54</sup> Henenu conducted an expedition to, perhaps, a place with *Hr.yw-š*, brought back products, and then possibly travelled to *Htyw-ʕ*.<sup>55</sup> In comparison, the text of Khety is preserved on a stela from his tomb at Asasif.<sup>56</sup> Possibly dating to the late Eleventh Dynasty or the early Twelfth Dynasty, the text opens with an offering formula followed by a first-person account of the *sd3.wty ntr m sid.t h3s.wt* “god’s sealer”<sup>57</sup> in making powerless the foreign lands” who, when in the *bi3.w* “mining region”,<sup>58</sup> inspected it and travelled around the foreign lands of *Tnht*, most feasibly the Sinai Peninsula (lines 2–3).<sup>59</sup> He then sealed treasuries (perhaps storehouses), and collected turquoise from mines in the area (lines 3–4). As emissary of the king, and like Old Kingdom officials, he held a special place in the king’s heart (lines 6–7). Accordingly, he drove off (*hsf*) the *ʕm.w*, adding that it was the fear of the pharaoh in foreign lands that made them respect Khety (lines 7–8). The official then notes his return in peace to the palace (*tyi.n(=i) m htp r ʕh=f*), bringing *tp.yw h3s.wt* “the best of the foreign lands”, with a range of minerals uniquely listed alongside their sources (lines 9–12), possibly located in the Sinai Peninsula, the Eastern Desert and/or the Gulf of Suez.<sup>60</sup>

And indeed, such lists of goods have survived on the Mit Rahina block of Amenemhat II.<sup>61</sup> While an administrative text, the formula of the dispatch of an expedition, and its return with cargo is repeated. Three main expeditions were sent, one to *Hnty-š*, bringing back a variety of products and *ʕm.w*, like in Iny’s biography, but *ʕ*-wood rather than Iny’s *Kbn.wt* “Byblos-type boats” (lines M7; M18–21). Another expedition from the Turquoise Terraces returned with minerals (dispatch not preserved; lines M13–14), while a third was sent to *Tw3* to hack up *St.t* (line M8), returning from *Tw3* and *Tsy* with products and captives (lines M16–18). There is no mention of routes, of the fear of the king, of losses, or of the names of involved officials, although the inscription does mention the giving of rewards, including gold (M21–26).

Significant differences are then attested in representations of travel from the reigns of Senwosret III and Amenemhat III. They are more personalised and more expansive in form, detail and content. Two biographical inscriptions have survived. The stela of Khusobek provides perspective of the *3tw ʕ n(y) nw.t* “great intendant of the city” as he accompanied Senwosret III on his campaigns to Nubia to overthrow the *Twn.tyw[-Sty]* and to Western Asia to overthrow the *Mnt.w* of *St.t*.<sup>62</sup> In each, the official highlights one significant personal encounter with a foreigner that emphasises his achievements. In reference to the campaign that reached *Skmm* in the north (lines C1–4), Khusobek describes how he bravely fought against a *ʕm*. Likely because of this, he was awarded a sheathed dagger by the king (line C5).

Closer to the literary narrative structure is the fragmentary biography of Khnumhotep III that likely originally adorned the façade of a mastaba tomb at Dahshur.<sup>63</sup> As reconstructed by Allen, the text begins with the titles of the official, *ir.y-p.t h3.ty-ʕ sd3.wty bi.ty* “hereditary prince, count, sealer of the king of Lower Egypt”<sup>64</sup> and *im.y-r3 pr.w wr* “chief steward”, followed by an offering formula.<sup>65</sup> Then, the biography presents the experiences of an *im.y-r3 mšc n(y) skd.w* “overseer of the expedition of sailors” (lines 1C1–2). Uniquely, this appears to be composed in narrative style and in third person, possibly for reasons of decorum.<sup>66</sup> The name of the overseer is also either suppressed or not preserved. The motive for travel was to evidently source *ʕ*-wood, the expedition docking at Byblos where the overseer meets with the city’s ruler *M3ki* to discuss

his intentions to reach *W3ti* (lines 1C2–3; 1D1–4, 2A2–3). The diplomatic event unravels using direct speech between the ruler and the overseer. As negotiations ensue, letter correspondence with the Egyptian Residence is mentioned (lines 3P6–10), and Egyptian militaristic intervention has been posited (lines 3D2–4).<sup>67</sup> As with Old Kingdom texts, Khnumhotep III appears as a representative of the king. Like Weni, the fragments preserve no evidence of the privileges and training he may have been afforded as a likely member of an affluent elite family from the Oryx nome, again with well-established connections with Western Asia.<sup>68</sup> Based on the surviving fragments, his achievements in the expedition were instead the focus of the composition. Unlike these earlier pieces, however, the successes involved more direct, personal encounters with named people and specific places beyond the borders of Egypt.

Such personalised experiences are further attested in expedition inscriptions by the reign of Amenemhat III (Table 2). A small number include details on the traversal of routes. The inscription of the *ir.y-ṣ.t n(.y) pr-ḥd* “hall-keeper of the treasury”<sup>69</sup> Hornakht at Wadi Maghara records: *iw d3.n=(i) nnw hr šps.w m wp.t Hr.w nb ḥ* “(I) traversed the *nn*-water carrying precious things on the mission of Horus, lord of the palace”.<sup>70</sup> That of the *im.y-r3 ḥn.wty wr n(.y) pr ḥd* “chief chamberlain of the treasury”<sup>71</sup> Ptahwer at Serabit el-Khadim mentions him *ini dr.w h3s.wt m rd.wy=f hbhb in.wt šb3.wt ini ph.w tmm.t rh* “reaching the boundaries of the foreign lands with his two feet, traversing the mysterious valleys, reaching the total end of the unknown”.<sup>72</sup> Perhaps, these travellers themselves were influenced by a more literary trope of boundary traversal at this time. Indeed, another inscription at Serabit el-Khadim for the *sd3.wty ntr im.y-r3 ḥn.wty hrp sk.w* “god’s sealer, chamberlain, controller of troops”<sup>73</sup> Horwerra describes the challenging task of searching for turquoise seemingly at the wrong time, during *tr pn ksn n(.y) šmw* “this difficult season of summer” (line 12).<sup>74</sup> The official persevered to successfully overcome the adversity with the will of the king in his heart (lines 13–8), and then directly instructs those who would search for the mineral not to lose hope but pray to Hathor who would assure success (lines 19–21). While the text mentions that his expedition arrived in its entirety with no loss (line 15), it remains uncertain if this refers to the expedition’s arrival at Serabit el-Khadim,<sup>75</sup> or its return to Egypt as the end of the text is not preserved. Nevertheless,

the return is commonly attested in other Middle Kingdom inscriptions at Serabit el-Khadim, some of which add that they would be ushered before the king upon their awaited arrival.<sup>76</sup>

#### TRAVEL AND SAFE RETURN IN THE TALE OF SINUHE AND OTHER MIDDLE KINGDOM LITERARY TEXTS

Against the background of the Old and Middle Kingdom representations of travel to Western Asia, it is apparent that the Tale of Sinuhe shares similarities as well as differences with earlier and contemporaneous compositions. From the beginning of Sinuhe’s narration of his journey, the Tale subverts established motivations for travel beyond the Nile Valley and introduces a third type of travel: flight *away* from a location.<sup>77</sup> As Moers writes, this emphasises the withdrawal from the ideal in the travel narrative.<sup>78</sup>

Yet like Weni, the Tale notes specific landmarks that were passed as he was crossing the borders of Egypt at the Walls of the Ruler (lines B11–23). He took a barge and headed eastwards from the quay of *Ng3w*, crossing east of the stone quarry above the Mistress-of-the-Red-Mountain (Gebel Ahmar) to then travel north until he reached the Walls.<sup>79</sup> After crossing this boundary, he reached *Ptn* and stopped at *Kmwr*, believed to be at the east of the Wadi Tumilat, before thirst, or “the taste of death” struck him. This physical or perhaps physiological reaction echoes a passage in the so-called Satire of Trades, wherein a trader who sets out to foreign lands would be *snd.w hr m3i.w hnṣ 3m.w rh=f sw r=f iw=f hr Km.t* “fearful of lions and 3m.w, he knows himself (only) when he is in Egypt” (line 7.7).<sup>80</sup> The representation of such emotion is not found in any of the other surviving texts detailing travel to Western Asia. Perhaps the closest parallel is in the description of the very different lands of the *hsi* “miserable” 3m as described in the Middle Kingdom Teachings of Merikara, with it being troubled<sup>81</sup> with water, forested and difficult to traverse (lines 91–92).<sup>82</sup>

In Sinuhe’s case, it was his heart that gave him strength, and the *St.tyw* who gave him water (lines B23–28). What follows is a much-discussed passage mentioning Sinuhe’s travels from foreign land to foreign land, setting out for Byblos and reaching *Kdm*, where a ruler of Upper *Rtnw*, Ammunenshi fetched him (lines B28–31).<sup>83</sup> The inclusion of Byblos here perhaps evoked cultural knowledge of the region as a well-known commercial partner with Egypt. Focussing only on the textual repertoire



mentioning travel (Table 1), Byblos appears as a destination in the Sixth Dynasty texts of Iny and Khnumhotep, as well as the Twelfth Dynasty biography of Khnumhotep III. It is additionally attested in the Admonitions of Ipuwer, which, in line with its portrayal of a disordered world, claims that no one sails to Byblos any more (lines 3.6–7).<sup>84</sup> If combined with other attestations of the toponym in Old and Middle Kingdom texts from Egypt, as well as the archaeological material at the site of Byblos, it is clear that this harbour city had strong commercial, diplomatic, and cultural ties with central Egyptian administrations, especially in the Sixth Dynasty and the mid-Twelfth to Thirteenth Dynasties.<sup>85</sup> Hence, by the Middle Kingdom, Byblos would have been well-recognised by several high officials in the Egyptian administration, especially those who embarked on expeditions to the Levant.

Another toponym mentioned in the Tale is *Rtnw*. Unlike Byblos, however, *Rtnw* clearly emerges in the Middle Kingdom cultural geography with most attestations dating to the mid-Twelfth Dynasty.<sup>86</sup> As recorded in the stela of Khusobek, the Egyptians engaged in hostile relations with a district in its area with a one-on-one clash between Khusobek and a *ʕm* (line C2). However, inscriptions from Serabit el-Khadim point to an alliance(s) that spanned over 20 years involving men from *Rtnw* that likely travelled with the Egyptians to Serabit el-Khadim.<sup>87</sup> Interestingly, both of these portrayals are presented in the Tale of Sinuhe, with the violent encounter with a strong man of *Rtnw* who challenges Sinuhe (lines B109–146), and in the supportive figure of the ruler of Upper *Rtnw* Ammunenshi, knowledgeable in Egyptian affairs and acquiescent towards the needs of Egyptians (lines B30–35). Therefore, perhaps Sinuhe's encounters align with the emergent representation of direct personal engagements with Levantines, both peaceful and violent, that are attested from the second half of Dynasty 12, as well as the contemporaneous representations of *Rtnw*.

Still, Sinuhe's more personal encounters remain unique for Egyptian texts in their details. Indeed, it should be borne in mind that Sinuhe's character development is the Tale's focal point; so, the description of foreign lands, groups and individuals is subordinate to and dependent on his own experiences.<sup>88</sup> Several works have explored their representation and characterisation: instances concerning the king showcase a more bellicose treatment that emphasise the foreigners' subjugation,

thereby agreeing with earlier representations of idealised relations between pharaohs and foreigners; while those concerning direct engagements with non-Egyptians offer more nuanced and individualised portrayals.<sup>89</sup> Sinuhe's conduct abroad is also in line with Egyptian precepts: he did not divulge details of circumstances in the palace to Ammunenshi,<sup>90</sup> he gave water to the thirsty (line B96), he conducted Egyptian messengers (lines B94–95), and he was courageous in battle and excellent in plans (lines B98–106). Despite the years spent abroad, Egyptian customs continued to be adhered to and favoured.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, upon the king's request via letter correspondence, a means of communication also mentioned in Khnumhotep III's biography, Sinuhe returned to Egypt (lines B238–245).

Before arriving at the court, he was greeted at the boundary. This detail occurs in an earlier Old Kingdom biography mentioning travel, but to the south of Egypt: the biography of Harkhuf at Qubbet el-Hawa mentions that the count, sole companion, and overseer of the two cool rooms, Khuni, was sent to greet him upon his return with ships laden with wine, cakes, bread and beer.<sup>92</sup> For Sinuhe, the overseer of the palace's fieldworkers was sent with ships laden with gifts for the *St.ty* who helped him on his journey home (lines B243–245).

Sinuhe was then presented to the court, the story concluding with his reinstatement into Egyptian society and the provision of a burial by the king (lines B286–308), fit for an Egyptian of high status. This agrees with the common trope attested in texts on the importance of returning from travel, or managing the safe arrival of expedition members in peace or with no loss.<sup>93</sup> Upon return, successful travellers could be presented to the court, like Sinuhe, and offered great rewards, which could include the provision of resources for a tomb.<sup>94</sup> Also aligned with the return and with this provision is the well-identified importance of being buried according to Egyptian burial practices, which is also attested in the Sixth Dynasty biography of Pepynakht-Heqaib who was sent to bring the body of a deceased person back to Egypt.<sup>95</sup>

#### NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Representations of travel in the Tale of Sinuhe preserve and transform earlier portrayals of the motivation, the journey, and the return from travel. Some details parallel Old Kingdom antecedents, but some appear closer to those of the Twelfth Dynasty.

However, as a composition that was likely recited and certainly copied,<sup>96</sup> the Tale's motif of border-crossing would have served additional purposes. As Moers notes with respect to the travel narrative, it allowed for the metaphorical equivalence of the "transgression of socially-defined boundaries" and cultural norms.<sup>97</sup> Several have observed that the incorporation of encounters with the foreign sharpened representations and perhaps perceptions of Egyptian identity.<sup>98</sup> Yet, of further importance is the trope of the return home. With this, local identity is retained and maintained. Thus, the Tale's inclusion of border traversal also reflects the tensions between the Egyptian and the Other, or the local and the supra-local, which are otherwise commonly attested in periods of increased connectivity.<sup>99</sup>

Hypothetically, if the Tale of Sinuhe was read and heard by scribes and other high officials of the late Twelfth Dynasty, then perhaps its commentary on travel and life abroad may have been accessible to those most likely involved in travel and transregional activities, including scribes and literate officials. Indeed, Darnell has identified texts at Wadi el-Hol that closely parallel excerpts from Sinuhe: one probably of Amenemhat III's reign is attributed to the priest Dedusobek who was travelling to participate in a festival at Deir el-Bahri and lists deities similar to those in Sinuhe (lines B206–210); and another is of the late Middle Kingdom to Second Intermediate Period and is a literary text.<sup>100</sup> If such travelling individuals encountered the Tale, one may offer a further interpretation that can be added to the many others proposed for its function and reception: perhaps it offered a treatise on transregionalism itself. Accordingly, it features details on the socially accepted conduct of Egyptians abroad, the pitfalls of the transregional experience, the state of affairs between the central Egyptian administration and key foreign groups and places, and the role of the state in ensuring the return and appropriate reward for Egyptians who travelled abroad.

In line with previous representations, the Tale further emphasises the importance of the 'return home' and the ability to re-join the Egyptian social structure securely and successfully, no matter the time and level of integration in non-Egyptian communities. This, in turn, suits well the period when the Tale was composed and copied as one of increasing connectivity, when transregional agents were likely required to be motivated to travel and to return, in accordance with the central

administration's ideals.<sup>101</sup> As Kristiansen writes in reference to Bronze Age trade, such compositions helped create "a mental template of cognitive geographies that makes distance and dangers, routes and destinations familiar to the traveler".<sup>102</sup> The travel-abroad motif and the representation of its aspects as exemplified in the Tale of Sinuhe would have thus made not only the foreign familiar; it also raised awareness of the concept of travel and traversing liminal borders. Perhaps, this is one of the many reasons for the Tale's enduring popularity across history.

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#### ABBREVIATION

*Urk. Urkunden des Ägyptischen Altertums. Abteilung I–VIII.* Leipzig—Berlin: Hinrichs, 1903–1988.

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For more on travel in ancient Egypt, see Baines 2004; 2007; Köpp 2008a; 2008b; Köpp-Junk 2013; 2015; Berg 2014.
- <sup>2</sup> Eriksen 2007, 172; Clavin 2005, 422; Vertovec 2009, 2.
- <sup>3</sup> For those of the Middle Kingdom, see Mourad, forthcoming.
- <sup>4</sup> See Faist 2004; Vertovec 2009; Pratt 2009, 311–312, 314.
- <sup>5</sup> For the Tale and its translation, see Koch 1990; Parkinson 1997, 21–53. For more on *St.t* and the *St.tyw*, see Mourad 2017.
- <sup>6</sup> For suggested interpretations of this Semitic-sounding name, see Rainey 1972, 373; Lichtheim 1973, 234, n. 4; Mourad 2013, 71.
- <sup>7</sup> Baines 1982, 32; Parkinson 1997, 26; 2002, 296–297. For more on the transmission of the text, see Winand 2014.
- <sup>8</sup> Burkard and Fischer-Elfert 1994, 110–111 [Nr. 167]; Obsomer 1999, 208.
- <sup>9</sup> The papyrus also comprises A Man and his Ba, and The Eloquent Peasant. Parkinson 2002, 72.
- <sup>10</sup> For an overview of proposed findspots, see Parkinson 2002, 72.
- <sup>11</sup> Other texts include the Dramatic Papyrus, the Onomasticon, expedition accounts regarding Nubian fortresses, and other teachings and maxims. See Quibell 1898, 3; Gardiner 1947, 6; Ritner 1993, 222–232; Morenz 1996, 144–147; Parkinson 2002, 71–72; Miniaci 2020.
- <sup>12</sup> Quibell 1898, 3; Miniaci 2020.
- <sup>13</sup> The definition of ‘genre’ in assessments of Egyptian texts is not without issue. It is approached here as a variable category of texts classified according to similarities in content as well as formal aspects. Parkinson 2002, 32–36; Vinson 2004; Di Biase-Dyson 2013, 50–54.
- <sup>14</sup> Loprieno 1996b, 51–52; Moers 2001, 106–154; Parkinson 2002, 60–63; Stauder 2014.
- <sup>15</sup> For more on ancient Egyptian biographies, see Lichtheim 1988; Gnirs 1996; Baines 1999a; Kloth 2002; Stauder-Porchet 2017; Stauder-Porchet, Frood and Stauder 2020.
- <sup>16</sup> Stauder-Porchet 2020a.
- <sup>17</sup> Baines (1982, 38) refers to the praise to Sahura in the biography of Niankhsekhmet (*Urk.* I, 39–40) and letters from kings in the biographies

- of Rashepses (Djedkara-Isesi; *Urk.* I, 179–180) and Harkhuf (Pepy II; *Urk.* I, 128–131). See also Baines 1999b, 29–31; Stauder-Porchet 2020a, 108.
- <sup>18</sup> Examples may be found in the biography of Kaientjennet at Saqqara of Djedkara-Isesi’s reign (*Urk.* I, 180–186) or the stela of Djari of Intef II’s reign (Clère and Vandier 1948, 14 [§18]). See also Stauder-Porchet 2020a, 108.
- <sup>19</sup> Baines 1999b, 30–31.
- <sup>20</sup> Parkinson (2002, 91–98) considers recurrent thematic elements of decorum that permeated time, contexts, and genres, such as matters of the heart, vices, and death; all could be subverted or questioned in Middle Kingdom literary texts. For more on clichés in biographies, see Coulon 2020. See also Lichtheim 1988, 6–7.
- <sup>21</sup> Examples may be found in the Old Kingdom biographies of Harkhuf (line 5; *Urk.* I, 122), Pepynakht-Heqaib (line 2; *Urk.* I, 133), or Idu Seneni (lines 4–5; Kloth 2002, 9 [Nr. 16]). In the First Intermediate Period, the expression “bread to the hungry and clothes to the naked” is, for instance, attested on the false door of Neferyu (line C.1–2; Fischer 1968, 206, pl. 25) or the stela of Seneni (line B.1; Fischer 1968, 209, fig. 43, pl. 26). See also Coulon 2020.
- <sup>22</sup> This can perhaps be compared with the conduct recorded by Egyptian officials in, for instance, the First Intermediate Period stela of Seneni (“I ferried across the stranded man in my boat. [I did not say?] “go away” to one who came to me, and conducted the traveller,” lines B.2–4; Fischer 1968, 209, fig. 43, pl. 26; Lichtheim 1988, 34), or the biography of Beni Hassan’s Amenemhat (“the (one) who offers a welcome to everyone travelling downstream or upstream,” south jamb, line 2; Kanawati and Evans 2016, 25, pls. 3, 82b).
- <sup>23</sup> Strudwick 2005, 149; Stauder-Porchet 2017, 15–16, n. 34; Vernus 2020, 172; Coulon 2020, 208.
- <sup>24</sup> Inscription Nr. 90. Gardiner and Peet 1952, pls. 25A, 26; Pantalacci 1996.
- <sup>25</sup> For more on approaches to literature, fictionality and narrativity in ancient Egypt, see Loprieno 1996a; 2003; Moers 1999a; 2001; Parkinson 2002.
- <sup>26</sup> Purdy 1977; Baines 1982, 34; Moers 1999b, 50; Parkinson 1999, 72–74, 76–79.
- <sup>27</sup> Baines 1982, 33; Loprieno 2003; Galán 2005, 15; Köpp-Junk 2013. See also Blumenthal 1984.
- <sup>28</sup> Moers 1999b; 2001.
- <sup>29</sup> See below, n. 93.
- <sup>30</sup> See Helck 1989; Redford 1992, 79, n. 47; Eder 1995, 191; Marcus 2007, 143–145; Mourad 2015, 78–79; Altenmüller 2015.
- <sup>31</sup> For the Abydos inscription, see *Urk.* I, 98–110; Richards 2002; Hofmann 2002. For that at Saqqara, see Collombert 2015.
- <sup>32</sup> Richards 2002, 82.
- <sup>33</sup> The term *aAm.w* is usually translated as “Asiatic.” It more broadly refers to individuals from several regions north(east) of Egypt during the Old and Middle Kingdoms (Mourad 2015, 194–196). Suggestions for its derivation include the Semitic *ʿm/glm* “people” or the Egyptian *ʿmʿ* “throwstick.” On the other hand, *Hr.ty.w-š* can be literally translated to “those who are on/across the sand”. Combined, the terms possibly identify individuals encountered in or across the desert regions north(east) of Egypt. For further discussion, see Rainey 1994, 81–82; Redford 1986, 127, n. 19; Espinel 2006, 123–126; 145; Gundacker 2017, 349–352.
- <sup>34</sup> The title *hn.ty.w-š* is typically translated as “land-tenant” or “tenant landholder” (Jones 2000, 189 [710]). Roth (1995, 1) favors “palace attendant,” which aligns well with the activities attested for officials bearing this title. The translation favored here follows Kanawati (2003, 14–24).
- <sup>35</sup> For a thorough discussion of the toponyms in the biography, see, with references, Gundacker 2017.
- <sup>36</sup> For suggestions that the “Northern Island” is likely in the Delta, see Goedicke 1957, 81; Gundacker 2017, 355.
- <sup>37</sup> For the suggestion that the “Gate of Imhotep” may be located near the Isthmus of Suez, see Gundacker 2017, 355.
- <sup>38</sup> For suggestions that the “District of Horus Lord of Truth” may be at or near the Eastern Delta or in the north of the Sinai Peninsula, see, with references, Gundacker 2017, 355; Cooper 2020, 141–142 [Nr. 16].
- <sup>39</sup> For suggestions on the location of the “Nose of Gazelle’s Head” in the Sinai Peninsula or the southern Levant, see, with references, Gundacker 2017, 355–361; Cooper 2020, 249–254 [Nr. 68.1].
- <sup>40</sup> Jones 2000, 246 [896].
- <sup>41</sup> For examples of activities conducted by holders of the title *hn.ty.w-š*, and royal favors bestowed

- to them in the Old Kingdom, see Kanawati 2003: 15–24.
- 42 Richards 2002, 93, fig. 15.
- 43 See Eyre 1994; Knoblauch 2010.
- 44 Jones 2000, 736–737 [2682].
- 45 Espinel 2004, 15–18; Edel, Seyfried and Vieler 2007, 467.
- 46 Baines 2013, 251–252; 2020, 55.
- 47 Marcolin and Espinel 2011.
- 48 Marcolin and Espinel 2011, 589.
- 49 Jones 2000, 767 [2791], 781 [2848], 892 [3268]. For the reading *sd3.wty* instead of *htm.ty*, see Ward 1982, 169 [1468].
- 50 *Urk. I*, 131–135; Kloth 2002, 13–14 [Nr. 25].
- 51 Jones 2000, 306 [Nr. 1116].
- 52 Jones 2000, 1009 [Nr. 3739]. For more on these epithets in the Old Kingdom, see Espinel 2015–2016.
- 53 Hayes 1949; Morales et al. 2016, 280–282; 2017, 155–165; 2018, 184–194; Zamacona 2019.
- 54 See Ward 1982, 22 [Nr. 140]; Allen 1996, 11.
- 55 Hayes 1949.
- 56 JE 45058. Gardiner 1917, 33–35; Schenkel 1965, 283–284 [Nr. 477]; Landgräfová 2011, 57–58 [Nr. 18].
- 57 Ward 1982, 171 [Nr. 1480].
- 58 For more on this term, see Cooper 2020, 222–225 [Nr. 55].
- 59 For more on this toponym, see Cooper 2020, 254–256 [Nr. 69].
- 60 See Cooper 2020, 153–155 [Nr. 21.4], 199–202 [Nr. 44.1], 213–215 [Nr. 51.1], 222–225 [Nr. 55.1], 229–230 [Nr. 57.1], 231–234 [Nr. 59.1], 234–235 [Nr. 60.1], 236–237 [Nr. 61.1], 237 [Nr. 62.1], 240–242 [Nr. 64.9], 254–256 [Nr. 69.1]. 261–265 [Nr. 73.1].
- 61 Altenmüller and Moussa 1991; Altenmüller 2015. See also Marcus 2007.
- 62 Manchester 3306. Garstang 1901; Peet 1914; Baines 1987; Goedicke 1998; Landgräfová 2011, 211–213 [Nr. 63]; Mourad 2015, 100–101, 281, fig. B.2.
- 63 Allen 2008.
- 64 Ward 1982, 102 [Nr. 850], 104–105 [Nr. 864], 170 [Nr. 1472].
- 65 Allen 2008, 32, pl. 1.
- 66 See also Baines 1999b, 30; Eyre 2013, 131–132; Vernus 2020, 189.
- 67 Allen 2008, 35–36.
- 68 See Mourad 2020; forthcoming.
- 69 Ward 1982, 59 [477].
- 70 Inscription Nr. 25. Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 10; Černý 1955, 68.
- 71 Ward 1982, 16 [80].
- 72 Inscription Nr. 54. Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 18; Černý 1955, 80.
- 73 Ward 1982, 14–15 [72], 136 [1173], 171 [Nr. 1480].
- 74 Inscription Nr. 90. Blackman 1930; Gardiner and Peet 1952, pls. 25A, 26; Černý 1955, 97–99; Goedicke 1962; Iversen 1984; Pantalacci 1996; Kurth 1996.
- 75 Goedicke (1962, 21 [u]) argues that the destination to which the expedition’s safe arrival (*iyi*) alludes is Serabit el-Khadim rather than the Nile Valley.
- 76 Inscriptions Nrs. 112 and 405. Černý 1955, 114, 205.
- 77 For more on Sinuhe’s flight, see Purdy 1977; Goedicke 1984; Spalinger 1998, 312; Obsomer 1999; Moers 1999b, 53–54; 2001, 252–255; Morschauser 2000; Parkinson 2002, 151–156.
- 78 Moers 1999b, 53–54; 2001, 252–253.
- 79 For explorations of the route, see Goedicke 1957; Bunbury and Jeffreys 2011, 69–71.
- 80 Helck 1970.
- 81 Although some translate *šhw m mw* as “lacking in water” (Lichtheim 1973, 108, n. 14; Parkinson 1997, 223), the translation here follows Gardiner (1914, 30) and Ward (1971, 29), with *šhw* instead referring to “misery, trouble, injury, or pain”.
- 82 Golénischeff 1913, pls. 11–12. The dating of the text is uncertain. Some ascribe it to the First Intermediate Period (Scharff 1936, 53; Ward 1971, 22; Lichtheim 1973, 97), some to the Eleventh Dynasty (Burkard 1977, 6) and others to the Twelfth Dynasty (Seibert 1967, 88).
- 83 See, for instance, Rainey 1972; Green 1983; Aḥituv 1984, 158; Goedicke 1992; Parkinson 1997, 44, n. 15; Schneider 2002; Mourad 2013.
- 84 Enmarch 2005, 27, 69.
- 85 See, for instance, Montet 1928; Kitchen 1967; Tufnell and Ward 1966; Smith 1969; Espinel 2002; Sowada 2009, 128–141; Flammini 2010; Mourad 2015, 165–171, 197, fig. 7.9; Colonna 2018; Kopetzky 2018; Ahrens 2020, 211–233.
- 86 See Mourad 2015, 199, fig. 7.9; Kopetzky and Bietak 2016, 371–372.
- 87 *Rtnw* is mentioned in Inscription Nrs. 85, 87, 92, 114, 115 and 120. Gardiner and Peet 1952, pls. 23 [85], 24 [87], 27 [92], 36 [114], 38 [114], 39 [115], 43 [120]; Černý 1955, 92–94 [85], 95 [87], 100 [92], 116–118 [114], 118–119 [115]; 122–124

- [120]; Seyfried 1981, 159–163 [9–10], 165 [13], 167 [16], 177–179 [31], 180–181 [35]; Bietak 2010, 147; Mourad 2015, 136–137; forthcoming; Tallet 2018, 38–42.
- <sup>88</sup> Moers 2001.
- <sup>89</sup> See, for instance, Loprieno 1988, 41–59, 83; Parkinson 2002, 157; Pérez-Accino 2011; el-Hawary 2014; Campagno 2015.
- <sup>90</sup> As identified in Bárta and Janák 2021, 107.
- <sup>91</sup> See Bárta 2003, 52; Galán 2005, 93–94; Bárta and Janák 2021, 112–114.
- <sup>92</sup> Biography of Harkhuf, left of the entrance, line 9. *Urk.* I, 127 [13–15]. See also Stauder-Porchet 2020b; 2020c.
- <sup>93</sup> For instance, the text of Khnumhotep and the biography of Weni, as discussed in this paper, or the First Intermediate Period stela of Fegu (“the overseer of priests, Weser, sent me on all kinds of missions, and I returned safely”; Lichtheim 1988, 35) and the biography of Amenemhat (“I returned following him (Senwosret I) as an alert one; no loss occurred in my army”; south thickness of entrance, lines 10–11; Kanawati and Evans 2016, 26, pls. 5, 84b). Other Middle Kingdom texts at Wadi Maghara, Serabit el-Khadim and Rod el-Air attest to the desire to reach (*pḥ*) home safely (Inscriptions Nrs. 28, 36, 40, 48, 53, 115, 142, 401, 413, 510–511, 516; Gardiner and Peet 1952, pls. 12 [28], 13 [40], 14 [36], 16 [48], 17 [53], 39 [115], 53 [142], 83 [401], 88 [413], 94 [510–511], 95 [516]; Černý 1955, 69 [Nr. 28]; 72 [36], 73 [40], 77 [48], 79 [53], 119 [115], 142 [142], 204 [401], 209 [413], 219 [510–511], 220 [516]).
- <sup>94</sup> The east face of Inscription Nr. 112 at Serabit el-Khadim also mentions how an expedition leader’s arrival was awaited in the palace, where he will be ushered in to see the king (Gardiner and Peet 1952, pl. 37; Černý 1955, 114). For more on the significance of attendance at court, see Baines 2020, 54–55.
- <sup>95</sup> Lines 10–15; *Urk.* I, 134–135. This is also mentioned in the biography of Sabni at Qubbet el-Hawa, who travelled to Wawat to return the body of his father for proper burial (lines 1–2; *Urk.* I, 135–136; Kloth 2002, 203–207 [Nr. 66]). For more on the return for burial in Egypt, see Köpp-Junk 2016, 27; Gundacker 2017, 346–347; Stauder-Porchet 2020b, 71.
- <sup>96</sup> For more on the reception of texts, see Parkinson 1996, 140–145; 1999, 64–66; Richards 2005, 19–31; Eyre 2013; Morenz 2013; Winand 2014.
- <sup>97</sup> Moers 1999b, 53. See also Campagno 2015.
- <sup>98</sup> Loprieno 2003, 32; Köpp-Junk 2013; Campagno 2015.
- <sup>99</sup> In reference to ancient Greek poleis, Müller (2016) recognises that “localism and the idea of the local are a byproduct of globalism, a reaction to connectivity”.
- <sup>100</sup> Inscription Nr. 5. Darnell 1997; 2002, 99–101 [WHRI 5], 107–119 [WHRI 8]; Parkinson 2002, 73; 2009, 125–126. See also Moreno García 2020, 254–255, 263.
- <sup>101</sup> See Baines 2007, 19; Kristiansen 2018, 4.
- <sup>102</sup> Kristiansen 2018, 4. Kristiansen refers to examples from Greek mythology (Odysseus) and oral traditions (Pytheas). For more on this, see also Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, 32–61; Fox 2008.