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THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EGYPT AND NUBIA EVIDENCED
BY THE SEMNA BOUNDARY STELA AND BORDER FORTRESSES

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ABSTRACT

International relationships are an integral part of understanding human interaction at the global level. These connections occur primarily through politics, economics, territorial expansion, and warfare, parallel to the way that ancient societies often came into contact with one another. Specifically, the international relationship between the ancient civilizations of Egypt and Nubia can be understood under these terms. This project will examine how Egypt interacted with Nubia in reference to the Semna boundary stela of Senwosret III and the border fortresses established along the southern Egyptian-Nubian border. The analyzation of the foreign policy enacted by Senwosret III, how it affected both the Egyptians and the Nubians, and the strategic placement of the fortresses contribute to an overall theme of international affairs in the ancient world. The Semna boundary stela provides the greatest insight into the mind of the Egyptians and, thus, is translated from Middle Egyptian into transliterations and then into English within the body of this text. With extensive research into ancient Egyptian history, politics, and defensive procedures, the significance of Egypt's relationship with Nubia shapes the pattern of communication between Egypt and most of its foreign neighbors. The research concludes that Egypt, acting as an agent of power during the Middle Kingdom, saw themselves as a superior nation worthy of dominating the other minor civilizations that existed within their network.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The ancient civilization of Egypt, especially during the Middle Kingdom, left a lasting impact on the world in terms of domestic politics and international relations, artistic expression, and literary creativity. The Egyptians built the foundation for many of the popular motifs found in literature, contributed to modern theories of physics and strategies of engineering, and enacted foreign policy that world leaders still rely on in times of international conflict and communication. The extensive religious pantheon of the Egyptians often contributed to ideologies surrounding warfare, scribal traditions, and monumental architecture- a three-fold combination that one might find on the Semna boundary stela of Senwosret III. The ancient policies of immigration and territorial expansion existed in Egyptian society long before the Middle Kingdom, but Senwosret III left a well-preserved example of how these procedures were actually enforced.

The tangible pieces of evidence attributed to the Twelfth Dynasty pharaoh Senwosret III represent the political beliefs of an entire nation during the Middle Kingdom. These approaches effectively allowed Egypt to maintain control over their southern neighbors, the Nubians. He generated a legacy through the erection of the Semna boundary stela and a series of border fortresses that guarded the southern boundary. He, like his predecessors, wanted to regulate passage into Egyptian territory. Senwosret III, however, not only regulated Nubian traffic through Egypt but also expanded the southern frontier from the First Cataract of the Nile to the Second Cataract at Semna. These key political decisions illustrate the way in which ancient

Egyptians viewed foreigners and the methods that they used to maintain power over their adversaries.

A comprehensive study of the Middle Kingdom period of Egypt further reveals the purpose of the Semna boundary stela and the accompanying border fortresses that define the physical boundary between Egypt and Nubia. These developments provide verification on the different strategies of foreign policy that the Twelfth Dynasty kings enacted, especially king Senwosret III. Today, international affairs are an important part of politics, economics, and social relationships. Therefore, translating the relationship between Egypt and Nubia as general population entities as well as translating the specific types of foreign policies enacted by Senwosret III based upon previous sources of influence allows for a deeper understanding of human thought and problem-solving skills in modern-day scenarios.

Geography of Egypt and Nubia

A working knowledge of the political boundaries and natural landscape of Egypt's past is a necessary tool in order to better understand the implications of the Semna boundary stela and the border fortresses erected by king Senwosret III. The geographical locations of Egypt and Nubia during the Middle Kingdom look quite different from the modern representations of northeastern Africa.



Figure 1: Map of Egypt and Nubia

One way of connecting to the thought processes of Senwosret III is through a recreation of the geopolitical context in which Egypt maintained its relationship with Nubia, especially along the southern border. The Semna boundary stela coupled with the border fortresses represent a physical reminder of how Senwosret III decided to define the geographical relationship with his country and the kingdom of Kush in terms of territorial expansion, trade, and methods of border patrol.

One of the most complex geographical concepts to understand about Egypt and Nubia is simply the directional orientation of the Upper and Lower regions. The ancient ideas of 'upper' and 'lower' contradict our traditional ideas of north and south, which should be interchangeable terminology. The ancients, however, thought differently. For example, Upper Egypt and Upper Nubia reside in the southern half of the country while Lower Egypt and Lower Nubia are part of

the northern half. The primary border fortresses that Senwosret III built after his territorial expansion into Nubia are situated in Upper Egypt, at the most southern points of the border, and Lower Nubia, at the most northern points of the border.

The distinctions between Upper and Lower Egypt are due, in part, to the directional flow of the Nile. Unlike most rivers, the Nile flows from south to north because of the difference in elevation between the northern and southern regions of the country. The Egyptians approached the landscape based upon the orientation of the Nile. When facing south, the east resides on the left-hand side while the west lies on the right-hand side. This is significant because the Egyptians saw the east as the “Land of the Living,” where the Nile created habitable land for early settlements. The west, however, became known as the “Land of the Dead” due to the inhospitable desert that ruined any chance of permanent occupation.¹ The Egyptians relied on these directional differentiations for the construction of building complexes, funerary practices, and defining the Egyptian landscape.

During the Middle Kingdom, the national boundaries were somewhat different from the present-day political border between Egypt and Sudan. The nation state of Egypt, while still occupying the northern-most corner of Africa, ended a few miles south of Aswan. Nubia, now part of the present-day Republic of Sudan and southern Egypt, stretched from the First Cataract to the Sixth Cataract of the Nile at Khartoum. The majority of Lower Nubia belongs to Egypt while the Nubian desert and Upper Nubia belong to northern Sudan. In ancient times, this area served as a buffer zone between the Egyptians and the Kushites.² The border fortresses stretched from Ikkur at the Second Cataract in Upper Egypt down to the Fourth Cataract in Napata of

¹ Breasted, J. H. (1905). *Egypt through the Stereoscope: A Journey through the Land of the Pharaohs* (Vol. 1). Underwood & Underwood.

² Emery, W. B. (1965). Egypt in Nubia. *The Twelfth Dynasty*. London: Hutchison & Co. 141-165.

Upper Nubia. The boundary stela, however, was erected at Semna, a region just south of the Second Cataract. This stela marked the southern border of Egypt's territory, but it was not found in situ. Scholars suggest that it stood at the gate of one of the border fortresses in the area where travelers could read the declaration of the king.³ The degree of land separation between Egypt and Kush continually changed as politics and kingship varied from pharaoh to pharaoh with different familial lines assuming the throne. The reign of Senwosret III, and the majority of the Middle Kingdom dynastic line, saw the separation between the countries defined within the bounds of the border fortresses and the natural cataracts of the Nile.

³ IBID.

Chapter 2

Overview of the Middle Kingdom

The Middle Kingdom period of Egypt represented an era of growth in terms of culture, politics, and economics. Historians often call the Middle Kingdom the “Classical Age” based upon the literary and cultural developments that came from this period.⁴ This generation spanned from 2000-1650 BCE⁵ in which parts of the Eleventh, Twelfth and Thirteenth Dynasties ruled over the Egyptian nation. The Twelfth Dynasty in particular evolved into a series of powerful influences that shaped the civilization’s success in the ancient world. These great rulers brought stability and wealth to a previously distressed Egyptian nation. Therefore, many political ideologies, economic practices, literary traditions, and scribal methods survived into later generations trying to recreate similar growth and success.

Unfortunately, much of the Middle Kingdom history remains unknown or based upon speculation. The Egyptians constructed their temples and tombs primarily out of limestone bricks. In later periods, pharaohs dismantled these monuments and either recycled the limestone for other building projects or burnt the blocks for the lime.⁶ The extraction of lime, however, does not begin until the time of the Roman occupation.⁷ The reliefs and depictions found on the walls of these structures disappeared as a result of the destruction, leaving only statuary left to represent the sculptural style of the period. Most famously, statues of Senwosret III and his son Amenemhet III have survived. These now serve as strong examples of innovative sculptures dating back to the Middle Kingdom. The lack of monumental physical remains prompted many

⁴ Grajetzki, W. (2013). Middle Kingdom, Egypt. *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*.

⁵ Franke, D. (2001). Middle Kingdom. In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*: Oxford University Press.

⁶ Grajetzki, W. (2006). Introduction. In *The Middle Kingdom of Ancient Egypt* (pp. 1). London: Duckworth.

⁷ Kaper, O. E. (1998). Temple building in the Egyptian deserts during the Roman period. Kaper (ed.), 1998, 139-58.

Egyptologists to further their study in other portions of Egyptian history. This does not mean that Middle Kingdom history has nothing to offer an archaeologist since a number of Middle Kingdom artifacts are on display in museums such as the one in Cairo. While monumental architecture of Middle Kingdom date is scarce in the archaeological record, the art, language, and literature of the period best represent its unique cultural tradition.

The Middle Egyptian stage of language evolved from Old Egyptian with shared similar features and writing styles. Middle Egyptian can be broken down into three sub-phases: classical, late, and traditional.⁸ The Egyptians primarily wrote their literary compositions in classical Middle Egyptian. Middle Egyptian also became the official language for religious texts and monumental inscriptions until the end of hieroglyphic writing.⁹ Middle Egyptian served as the official royal language of the Middle Kingdom, to which the Semna boundary stela is a perfect example of the prestige attributed to the Middle Egyptian stage of language. While examples of the script still exist today in the form of papyrus texts and inscriptions, it is unclear how the Middle Egyptian language sounded phonetically.

The Middle Egyptian language phase also defined the literary tradition of the Middle Kingdom. The two dominating genres at this time included narratives and stories as well as teachings and instructions. “The Story of Sinuhe,” “The Eloquent Peasant,” and the “Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor” are three famous stories from this time period. The significant tropes of the narrative genre most noticeably transferred into modern-day literary styles. The themes of action and adventure appear in the majority of today’s most popular novels. Texts found within the genre of teachings and instructions include the Maxims of Ptahhotep, the Instructions of

⁸ Allen, J. P. (2013). *The ancient Egyptian language: An historical study*. Cambridge University Press.

⁹ IBID.

Amenemhet, and the Instructions of Amenemope. These texts occupy a larger Wisdom genre found in the Ancient Near East that Biblical scholars often study in comparison to Old Testament religious texts. The cultural developments of the Middle Kingdom make this period stand out from other time periods in ancient Egyptian history.

Political Climate of the Middle Kingdom

The backdrop for the incoming Middle Kingdom period was that of civil unrest and political disunity across the nation of Egypt. The decline of the Old Kingdom, characterized by the building of many famous pyramids, sparked the beginning of an age that Egyptologists call the First Intermediate Period. The chaos that ensued across the country created an opportunity for the early rulers of the Eleventh Dynasty to reinstate order and restore the strong centralized system of government. Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II, a Theban pharaoh of the Eleventh Dynasty, reunited the Upper and Lower regions of Egypt, signaling the end of a long span of bloodshed. As the Eleventh Dynasty was brought to an end by a common upstart, the great pharaonic rulers of the Twelfth Dynasty dominated the majority of the Middle Kingdom period, ruling for over 200 years as a single familial line.¹⁰

The comprehensive list of the chronology¹¹ of the kings of the Eleventh and Twelfth Dynasties gives a background into the dates and progression of Middle Kingdom history. This list focuses on the end of the Eleventh Dynasty and the entire Twelfth Dynasty because of its relevancy to the subject material as a whole. The chronology is as follows:¹²

¹⁰ Simpson, W. (2001). Twelfth Dynasty. In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*.: Oxford University Press.

¹¹ All dates attributed to the Middle Kingdom dynasts are estimates and disputed among Egyptologists.

¹² Dates and titles for this chronology are taken from the “Egyptian King List” article in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*. This material is based upon the Turin King List that dates to Ramesses II.

Eleventh Dynasty

Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II c. 2061-2011 BCE

Sankhkare Mentuhotep III c. 2011-2000 BCE

Nebtawyre Mentuhotep IV c. 2000-1998 BCE

Twelfth Dynasty

Sehetepibre Amenemhet I c. 1991-1962 BCE

Kheperkare Senwosret I c. 1971-1928 BCE

Nubkhaure Amenemhet II c. 1929- 1895 BCE

Khakheperre Senwosret II c. 1897-1877 BCE

Khakaure Senwosret III c. 1878-1843 BCE

Nimaatre Amenemhet III c. 1843-1797 BCE

Maakherure Amenemhet IV c. 1798-1790 BCE

Sobekkare Sobekneferu c. 1790- 1786 BCE

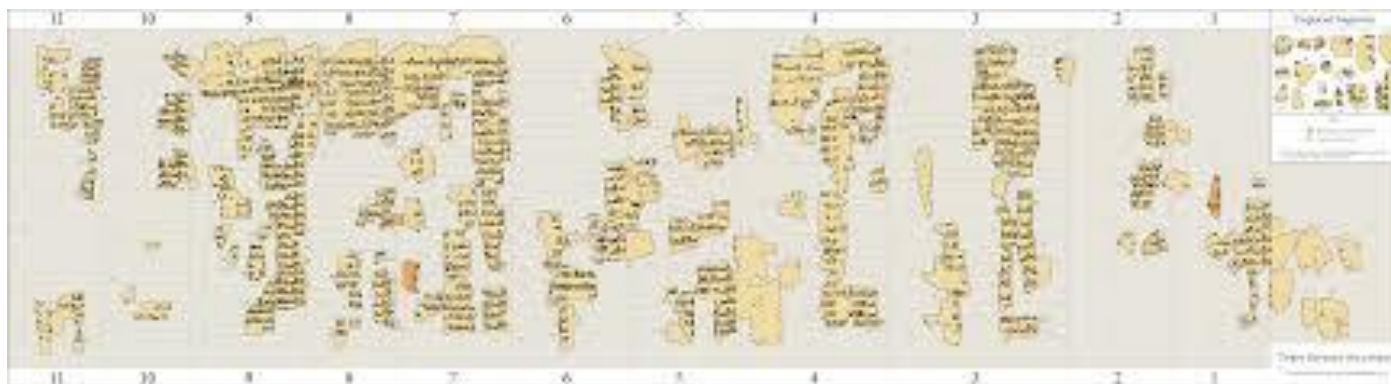


Figure 2: Turin King List

The major political changes that occurred as a result of Mentuhotep II's reign brought two independent Egyptian regimes under a single geopolitical landscape at the start of the Middle Kingdom. The centers of Herakleopolis and Thebes were the primary sources of conflict

during the First Intermediate Period. The nomarchs of the south, including Thebes, attempted to build their own independent kingdoms, creating much of the disunity between Upper and Lower Egypt.¹³ Herakleopolis exercised control over Lower Egypt and often fought with the Upper Egyptian capital of Thebes. Their hostility towards one another ended toward the latter half of the Eleventh Dynasty and the reunification of Egypt. The first king of the Twelfth Dynasty, Amenemhet I, who assumed the throne when the country returned to another span of civil unrest,¹⁴ used this period of war to move the capital from Thebes in the south to Itj-Tawy in the north.¹⁵ The movement of the capital impacted the political sphere of Egypt and its international neighbors. As the primary source of conflict between Herakleopolis and Thebes started to dwindle, the focus turned to Nubia in the south.

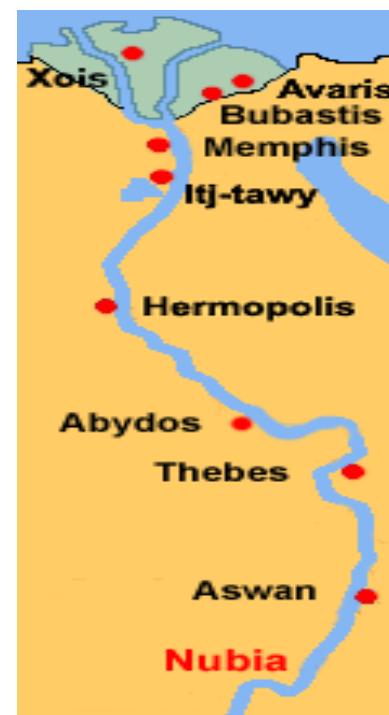


Figure 3: Map of Itj-Tawy

The Middle Kingdom ushered in some of the first concrete examples of the co-regency position. Coregencies occurred when the incumbent pharaoh hand-picked his successor and named him as the next king before his own death; the two were often recognized as simultaneous rulers.¹⁶ This allowed the senior ruler and the junior ruler to work side-by-side, giving the junior partner an opportunity to advance in the areas of leadership that the senior partner found arduous. This relationship endured until the older king died, making the concept of royal succession much

¹³ Strudwick, N., & Strudwick, H. (1999). *Thebes in Egypt: A guide to the tombs and temples of ancient Luxor*. Cornell University Press.

¹⁴ Grajetzki, 2013.

¹⁵ Franke, D. (2001). Amenemhet I. In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*.: Oxford University Press.

¹⁶ Murnane, W. (2001). Coregency. In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*. : Oxford University Press.

more stable and managed.¹⁷ The coregency position also affected the reign of Senwosret III, his father, and his son.

The Illahun papyri records, found in the pyramid of Senwosret II,¹⁸ revealed an entry that mentioned the nineteenth year of an unnamed twelfth-dynasty pharaoh followed by the first year of another king.¹⁹ Originally, scholars attributed these records to Senwosret II and his son, Senwosret III making any coregency between the two pharaohs very short lived. Later scholarship realized that Senwosret III occupied the throne for nineteen years, making the coregency position one between Senwosret III and his son, Amenemhet III.²⁰ Although their coregency was only a slight overlap, materials found in the archaeological record with inscriptions on them, texts from the Faiyum, and a speech from Senwosret III naming his son all recognize both pharaonic names as co-leaders of Egypt.²¹ During an expedition to Abydos in 1994, an excavation team found a dated hieratic administrative note in the funerary temple of Senwosret III.²² This note supported the idea that Senwosret III's reign lasted thirty-nine years, signaling that the coregency between Senwosret III and Amenemhet III started in the senior's twentieth year.²³

Toward the end of the Middle Kingdom, the nation of Egypt fell back into a period of chaos and disagreement. The Second Intermediate Period illuminates the fragility within the Middle Kingdom government, especially in terms of foreign diplomacy and economic security.

¹⁷ Grajetzki, 2013.

¹⁸ Frey, R. (2001). Illahun. In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*. : Oxford University Press.

¹⁹ Murnane, 2001.

²⁰ IBID.

²¹ IBID.

²² Wegner, J. (1996). The Nature and Chronology of the Senwosret III-Amenemhat III Regnal Succession: Some Considerations Based on New Evidence from the Mortuary Temple of Senwosret III at Abydos. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 55(4), 249-279.

²³ IBID.

The pharaohs of the late Twelfth Dynasty and early Thirteenth Dynasty experienced a sharp decline in power when the Hyksos from the north invaded Egypt. At this point, the fortresses in Nubia became neglected as Egypt's focus shifted to a new threat. The Syro-Palestinian attackers overthrew the weaker Thirteenth Dynasty and implemented a line of Hyksos successors numbered in the king-list that made up the Fifteenth Dynasty.²⁴ This invasion impacted Egypt's control over Nubia. When the Hyksos took over the north, the political unity within Egypt collapsed.

Economic Standing of the Middle Kingdom

The positive reputation of the Middle Kingdom evolved, in part, from the economic success that came out of this time period. The economic status of Egypt during the Middle Kingdom greatly depended on trade, accounting practices, and the activities of the royal court. Egypt in antiquity operated on a "grain economy," in which crop collection and redistribution to trading partners defined much of the import and export market.²⁵ In broad terms, the system of the Middle Kingdom period is best described as a redistributive economy. This simply means that accounting practices occupied the center of all trade coming into the kingdom as well as the redistribution of goods to the hands of the consumers.²⁶ Therefore, accounting dominated much of the economy and the literary documents that still exist as part of the archaeological record.

²⁴ Quirke, S. (2001). Second Intermediate Period. In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*.: Oxford University Press.

²⁵ Ezzamel, M. (2002). Accounting and redistribution: The palace and mortuary cult in the Middle Kingdom, ancient Egypt. *Accounting Historians Journal*, 29(1), 61-103.

²⁶ IBID.

The scribal tradition of accounting included calculations for taxable income, estimated taxable capacity, levied precise taxable liability, and careful storage of redistributed rations or wages.²⁷ The system of accounting allowed the Egyptians to understand their patterns of trade, taxation, and storage in preparation for future transactions, giving them a stable redistributive economy. The Egyptians ensured that their entire population figured into their accounting practices, starting with the pharaoh and the palace and continuing into the general population during periods of economic hardship. The economy of the Middle Kingdom greatly benefited the country and the rulers attributed to the successful stability.

In Nubia, the Egyptians found a plethora of resources that contributed to the growing economy. The mineral wealth in Nubia enticed the Egyptians, especially in terms of the gold reserves and access to fine-grained stone.²⁸ The Egyptians believed that by taking control of Nubia, they could gain access to trade and movement in countries beyond the Nubian border, thus accumulating even more resources. With a heavy reliance on trade, Egypt needed access to Nubia's trading partners to expand their own network of business collaborators. The wealth generated by Nubian trade and conquest encouraged the Egyptians to continue asserting economic dominance over this region. In fact, the stability of Egypt's economy relied on cooperation from the Nubians and other neighboring societies.

Middle Kingdom Society

The Middle Kingdom society revolved around literature, art, new funerary practices, and a growing social class system. The rulers of the Middle Kingdom explicitly turned to a mindset

²⁷ IBID.

²⁸ Welsby, 2001.

of Egypt as a harmonious society, rather than one caught in the waves of turmoil and disunity.²⁹

Social stratification impacted most aspects of cultural change throughout the Middle Kingdom as reflected in the material record. The ceramic sequence of this period shows influence of Syro-Palestinian tradition along with Levantine imports found in the Delta region. The appearance of statuary, as mentioned previously, involved styles such as squatting and cuboid forms, a defining feature of the Middle Kingdom.³⁰ Furthermore, pharaohs relied on limestone bricks for temple-building, which reinforced the role of the temple as an economic institution as well as a place for the elite to worship the gods.

The mortuary cult of the Middle Kingdom reveals the most significant information about the structure of the class system during this period. At the basic level, the Egyptians found themselves as part of a two-tier society with the nobles and the common people.³¹ Further investigation into cemetery plots and funerary culture revealed a much more complex system of social stratification and inequality. The existence of a middle class, which is the largest class found within modern-day American society, is a highly debated topic in the field of Egyptology. The lack of evidence in the material or literary record makes this a difficult question to answer in its entirety. Class systems, however, are difficult to gauge since the majority of records, both in the form of texts and monuments, are created by or for the ruling class thus reflecting their own views.

Burials of the Middle Kingdom came in three different types: surface graves, shaft graves, and tombs.³² Status markers for each type of burial came from the surface architecture of

²⁹ Franke, 2001.

³⁰ IBID.

³¹ IBID.

³² IBID.

the tombs and the items found within the funerary complex. Due to the lack of inscriptions within the grave site, the funerary style makes it difficult to determine an exact classification of the tomb's owner. For example, a shaft grave found with semiprecious metals in the local cemetery could indicate that a middle-class townsman was buried there, but it could also indicate an upper level servant with connections to the ruling class. Most importantly, social stratification carried into the afterlife,³³ which poses the question: why is it so difficult to distinguish the class system through burial goods or the type of grave itself? In Egyptian culture, members of society sought intermediaries for the afterlife in an attempt to save their soul from certain destruction. The access to ritual knowledge, resources for mummification, and a coffin passed through society in a hierarchical manner; nevertheless every member of Egyptian society believed that they could become Osiris after death.³⁴ Therefore, funerary culture represents an important distinction of Middle Kingdom society, but also serves as an inconclusive piece of evidence for the argument of an independent middle-class.³⁵

The ruling class and the lower class did not freely interact with each other. Egypt's closed ruling class consisted of the pharaoh, who was inaccessible to the common people, and a court of noble officials who assisted the pharaoh in governmental affairs. The common class mainly consisted of poor farmers and skilled or non-skilled craftsmen, although there is evidence for groups of beggars within this section as well.³⁶ Archaeological evidence and literary texts reveal that the Middle Kingdom Egyptian society was anything but homogenous in social order. While we have sources from tomb inscriptions and texts like "The Eloquent Peasant," this leaves little

³³ IBID.

³⁴ IBID.

³⁵ The debate about an ancient middle class is widely discussed and still unsolved. The point of this paper is not to try and remedy this mystery, but to shed light on Middle Kingdom society under the evidence that exists. This includes inscriptions, funerary practices, and speculation of cultural patterns.

³⁶ Grajetzki, 2006.

to be known of the marginalized, unorganized groups of Egypt such as the beggars and social outcasts.

The purpose of finding a middle class within the Middle Kingdom society is to provide proof of an independent class of people who received an education and a source of income. This becomes important when discerning how the Egyptian government interacted with the common people and who exactly had access to the literary corpus found within the archaeological record. A hymn written to Senwosret III, found within his temple complex, outlined the role of a king in relation to territorial expansion and protection of his people.³⁷ This supports, but does not solidify, that an independently educated ‘middle class’ who accrued their own wealth did exist in Egypt under the approval of the king. This information reveals the social trajectory that Egypt followed in terms of development and cultural inclusion from the beginning of society into the modern-day civilization, further affecting other ancient societies that existed under their sphere of influence at the time.

³⁷ IBID.

Chapter 3

History of Senwosret III

The Middle Kingdom pharaoh Senwosret III ruled over Egypt from c. 1878-1843 BCE.³⁸ He was the fifth pharaoh of the Twelfth Dynasty following the reign of his father, Khakheperre Senwosret II and his wife Khenemet-nefer-hedjet-weret I begot Khakaure Senwosret III, who later became heir to the throne.³⁹ He presided over Egypt for approximately four decades until his death, although the exact length of his rule has been disputed by scholars. Whether or not Senwosret II made his son a



Figure 4: King Senwosret III

co-regent, his father likely influenced the way in which Senwosret III decided to govern Egypt. Senwosret III inherited his throne with a wealth of knowledge, power, and respect from the royal court. Politically, he earned a great amount of respect for his dealings with Nubia and the Palestinian region.

Statue depictions highlighted the uniqueness of Senwosret III as an Egyptian king. His distinct facial features included heavy eyelids with strong pouches under the eyes and defined cheeks and eyebrows.⁴⁰ Sculptors often included a down-turned mouth that conveyed his seriousness and thoughtfulness as both an old man or a younger version of himself. Senwosret III

³⁸ Delia, R. (2001). Senwosret III. In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*. : Oxford University Press.

³⁹ Senwosret III (Kha'Kauré). (2012). In M. R. Bunson, *Facts on file library of world history: Encyclopedia of ancient Egypt* (3rd ed.). Facts On File.

⁴⁰ Delia, 2001.

described himself as ‘aggressive, thoughtful, and merciful’⁴¹ in the Semna boundary stela. Artist interpretations attempted to illustrate these aspects in sculpture as a way to visualize the king’s personality. The images of Senwosret III represented a king who paid attention to his people, protected Egypt, and fought for the expansion of its territory. Senwosret III, even in physical appearance, left an impressionable mark on the legacy of the Twelfth Dynasty pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom.

Senwosret III is most revered for his military campaigns and the monumental architecture that defined much of the southern Egyptian border. In terms of his relationship with Nubia, Senwosret III conducted four different campaigns to protect trade and prove Egypt’s mighty power against Nubian uprisings. He started expanding Egypt’s southern frontier by clearing the First Cataract of the Nile so that his fleet possessed access into Nubian territory. Then, he extended the border from the First Cataract into Nubian territory at the Second Cataract. Semna served as the boundary city, marking where the Nubians were no longer allowed to enter Egypt except under reasons of trade or official business.⁴² Thus, Senwosret III erected border fortresses and boundary stelae across the southern boundary to ensure that the Kushites lost their access to Egyptian land.

Most interestingly, Senwosret III became a patron deity in Nubia during the Middle Kingdom; an irony since the king conquered their territory and refused to let them pass through the region without authorization. Senwosret III, however, ended a long period of resistance between the Nubians and the Egyptians. His military achievements and political decisions impacted the Nubians, who deemed his accomplishments worthy of deification.⁴³ During the

⁴¹ IBID.

⁴² IBID.

⁴³ Emery, Walter B. (1965). *Egypt in Nubia*. Hutchinson.

Late Period, the Nubian king Taharqa dedicated temples and altars to Senwosret III under the approval of the general population.⁴⁴ The famous historian Herodotus and Roman author Diodorus Siculus combined the traits of Senwosret III, Senwosret I, and Rameses II into the accounts of king Sesostris, a ruler known for his lawmaking, building, and conquests.⁴⁵ The influence of king Senwosret III penetrated later ideals of kingship, foreign policy, and construction.

⁴⁴ Delia, 2001.

⁴⁵ IBID.

Chapter 4

The Relationship Between Egypt and Nubia

The interactions between Egypt and Nubia began to form in the pre-dynastic era of Egyptian history. At its earliest stage, this relationship functioned on the basis of trade between the Egyptians and the Nubian A-Group.⁴⁶ These two settlements followed a similar trajectory in terms of their state formation. They started evolving around the same times likely as a result of physical proximity. Egypt and Nubia, however, have a complex history, going back to the end of the Old Kingdom, with periods of violent invasions, political upheavals, and a complex economic system. By the Sixth Dynasty, the Aswan governors exhaustively resettled Nubia and wrote about the events in their tomb biographies.⁴⁷ Due to Egypt's sporadic interference with Nubia, its history is now riddled with traces of Egyptian culture, heritage, and religious influence.

As part of the pharaonic tradition, kings created corpuses with records of their enemies, their campaigns, and their newly acquired resources. These records contained the names of 177 Nubians, almost half of the recorded names of the king's enemies.⁴⁸ The movement of Nubians in and out of Egypt marked a distinct period of time before the territorial expansion of the Middle Kingdom. This does not, however, suggest that Egypt's physical involvement in Nubia became any less influential or domineering. Since the beginning of their relationship, Nubians primarily found themselves in Egypt in order to serve as soldiers stationed at the sides of warring dynasts during periods of civil war.⁴⁹ It is speculated that Nubian soldiers outnumbered Egyptian

⁴⁶ Morkot, R. (2001). *Egypt and Nubia*. Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁷ VVILLIAMS, B. E. (1999). *Serra East and the mission of Middle Kingdom fortresses in Nubia*.

⁴⁸ IBID.

⁴⁹ IBID.

ones in certain military disputes. As supported by their presence in Egypt, the Egyptians clearly wanted Nubians for their manpower to strengthen politics, war, and economics within the country.

During the Middle Kingdom, the Eleventh Dynasty continued to uphold trade systems and military campaigns into Upper Nubia. At this time, Nubia consisted of multiple powerful tribes. For this reason, Egypt exploited the opportunity to conquer the region under its newfound unified system of government. The Twelfth Dynasty rulers of Amenemhet I and Senwosret I erected a series of fortresses in an attempt to extend Egyptian power and protect their borders. According to official records, the Egyptians maintained a rather violent relationship with Nubia, destroying both crops and other forestation and ravaging villages throughout the country.⁵⁰ The Twelfth Dynasty pharaohs implemented a pattern of ethnic cleansing in order to keep the kingdom of Kush from expanding into Egyptian territory.

Although outside of the timeframe for this paper, continuing the timeline of Egypt's involvement in Nubia throughout the New Kingdom is helpful in understanding the course of their relationship after the Middle Kingdom. At this stage, the relationship between Egypt and Nubia stretches back for thousands of years so it must be viewed as part of the result of an ongoing interaction. Egypt's rule in Nubia lasted for roughly 500 years during the New Kingdom with territorial expansion stretching from the Third Cataract to the Fourth Cataract.⁵¹ Military expeditions reached their height during the New Kingdom as the Egyptians became an empire in the south with the expansion of their frontiers.

⁵⁰ Morkot, 2001.

⁵¹ IBID.

Egypt's reign in Nubia declined at the end of the Twentieth Dynasty, although the evidence is unclear exactly how and when the change occurred.⁵² As the military presence abandoned the Kush region, the border frontier also retreated back to the Second Cataract. It is assumed that problems within the Egyptian government or with an indigenous Nubian people group brought about the end of Egyptian interference. In order to maintain control over a disunified region, such as Nubia, Egypt needed to maintain its own unity and political authority. Thus, the Egyptians lessened their physical intercession in Nubia.

⁵² IBID.

Chapter 5

Foreign Policy

Egypt, from an early stage in their history, sought to conquer smaller centers of civilization, exploit their wealth and resources, and assert control over much of the Near East and the African regions. This plan for expansion took place in three phases, which are particularly evident in Africa. The first step took the form of spontaneous exploration. The Egyptians plundered settlements and surveyed land areas to get a better idea of local resources and trading opportunities. Next, the Egyptians set up trade networks with the leaders of the civilizations that they found. They made sure to monopolize on trade routes and resources by controlling the Nile. Finally, the Egyptians took the last step of direct colonization. They replaced the native ruler and set up their own colonial regime. This stayed in place until the cost of maintaining the colonial settlements outweighed the positive revenue.⁵³

Egypt's interaction with foreigners started to arise in the Early Dynastic Period with waves of outsiders creating conflict for the Egyptians. The Egyptians wanted to find ways to stimulate their own economy, so they looked to Nubia, their closest neighbor. The foreign policy at this point focused on commerce and trade relations. Initially, trade was a privatized business that used unprofessional tactics; if the Egyptians wanted high-value items, they simply went into the country and took them. Archaeologists do, however, see evidence of Egyptian pottery and low-value goods at grave sites which indicate trade at a local level below the imperial one.

⁵³ Adams, W. Y. (1984). The first colonial empire: Egypt in Nubia, 3200–1200 BC. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 26(1), 36-71.

During the Middle Kingdom, the pattern of government legislation with the Nubians began under the reign of Mentuhotep I. He imposed a policy of raiding neighboring countries for resources and for the sake of exercising authority. In the case of Lower Nubia, Egyptian troops acquired permanent control of the area in order to avoid future raids in retaliation. At the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty, Amenemhet I and his son Senwosret I, coregent of Egypt, worked diligently along the southern border running several campaigns through Nubia as part of their military operations. The motives behind their invasion policy progressed out of their desire for colonial expansion and the necessity to preserve Lower Nubia as a buffer zone. The Egyptians' difficult history with the Kushites encouraged the preservation of neutral space throughout their exploitation of the natural wealth found in Nubian products.⁵⁴

Egypt's interest in Nubia likewise began long before the Middle Kingdom; kings like Senwosret III and his predecessors held strong beliefs about their superiority over the Nubians. As the two cultures diverged after a period of similar development, Egypt organized into a centralized government and the A-group inhabitants of Lower Nubia struggled to create a consolidated source of power.⁵⁵ The amount of control that Egypt asserted over Nubia depended on both the ability of pharaoh to exercise political control and the will of the Nubians to resist Egyptian power. Senwosret III took especially great political interest in Nubia, leading to the erection of border fortresses, boundary stelae, and the implementation of foreign border patrol.

Senwosret III created a foreign policy unlike any of the previous rulers of Egypt. While he enacted strong legislation regarding the invasions of Nubia, he also turned his attention to his Syro-Palestinian neighbors to the north. While there is no evidence of extensive or independent

⁵⁴ Mumford, G. D. (2013). Forts, Pharaonic Egypt. *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*.

⁵⁵ Welsby, D. (2001). Nubia. In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*. : Oxford University Press.

Egyptian control in the Near East, Senwosret made several trips to the Syro-Palestinian region to accumulate wealth and resources. In Nubia, Senwosret III expanded on pre-existing military fortresses and built new fortifications in areas that needed them.⁵⁶ Senwosret's foreign policy insisted that Egypt's presence be made known to outside civilizations, especially in terms of wealth and military power. His success with ending rebellion in Nubia and reinforcing the established borders created a newly pacified relationship with the Nubians. His foreign policies, nonetheless, centered around intimidating the Nubians into doing what the Egyptians desired.

⁵⁶ Willems, 2010.

Chapter 6

Border Fortresses

The concept of constructing border fortresses in Egypt began during the First Dynasty of the Early Dynastic Period. In architectural terms, the fortifications found in Egypt followed the pattern of non-military structures similar to palace compounds and mortuary complexes.⁵⁷ Fortifications, according to military history, fall under three different categories: refuges, strongholds, and strategic defenses. Refuges are often used for retreating, strongholds are a central location dedicated to securing the surrounding area and storing weapons, and strategic defenses purposefully create a line of fortresses across a border or frontier region.⁵⁸ Thus, by these military definitions, the fortifications utilized by Senwosret III on the Nubian border are part of a system of strategic defenses and strongholds. This network of defenses, however, began under the reign of Senwosret I in the early Twelfth Dynasty.

The fortifications across Egypt varied in terms of design and materials, based upon the resources available at the site of the fort. In areas with limited clay resources, the Egyptians often turned to imported mud bricks or took advantage of local building materials. Other fortresses incorporated fieldstone, limestone, and rough stone for the walls of the stronghold. The Egyptians worked out a system for drainage and stabilization in the coastal marshlands and in areas with high water tables. Therefore, the structural integrity of these forts adapted to the landscape in which it was placed.⁵⁹ The standard layouts found in fortress designs ranged from square, rectilinear, L-shaped, and irregular. These designs matched the variety of topography

⁵⁷ Mumford, G. D. (2013). Forts, Pharaonic Egypt. *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*.

⁵⁸ IBID.

⁵⁹ IBID.

found in Egypt and Nubia.⁶⁰ During the Middle Kingdom, Nubian border fortresses consisted of complex three-layered walling systems. The outer lower wall sat on the edge of a slanted bank leading to a plastered dry moat; the low inner wall relied on reinforcements from rounded buttresses; the higher inner wall accompanied the projecting square towers where archers secured their firing positions. The details poured into the Middle Kingdom fortifications greatly attributed to Egyptian success in the Nubian region.

In 1896, British Egyptologist James Quibell discovered a cache of Middle Egyptian papyri in a Theban tomb which included a list of geographical names for the fortresses and strongholds.⁶¹ The list contains the names of seventeen strongholds, eight of which belong to the Nubian strategic defense system of the Second Cataract. The locations of these fortresses are as follows: Semna South, Semna West, Kumma, Uronarti, Shalfak, Mirgissa, Iken, and Buhen. These fortresses date to different kings of the Twelfth Dynasty, but most of them were completed upon Senwosret III's conquests of Nubia. The sheer number of fortresses in the Semna region illustrate the importance of that particular city as a protective center located on the Egyptian border.

This intricate system of border defenses is particularly helpful for archaeologists to analyze the way in which the Egyptians viewed the Kushites from a defensive perspective. Upon analyzing Senwosret III's strategic fortress system, one may infer that the Egyptians feared a violent attack from the kingdom of Kush implicating that a world-class Nubian military. With reinforced walls and multiple installations, the Egyptians created a well-protected border strong enough to withstand any type of attack from the southern region. The Kushites, however, were

⁶⁰ IBID.

⁶¹ Emery, 1965.

not the only tribes found in Nubia, although they were likely the biggest threat to the Egyptians in terms of economic gain and political dominance. Therefore, these fortresses speak strongly about the value of southern trade goods to the Egyptian economy and the value of Egypt's control over their southern border and the buffer region of Nubia. These forts took a massive amount of natural resources and time to construct, as evidenced by the one-hundred-year span between Senwosret I and Senwosret III, but the reward of protection brought a wealth of imported resources and exposed the Egyptians' fear of the vile Kushites in Nubia.

Unfortunately, over half of the fortresses listed on the papyrus found by Quibell are now covered by the backwaters of Lake Nasser.⁶² The completion of the Aswan dam destroyed many of the fortresses along the Nile Cataracts, leaving some excavations incomplete and unsatisfactory. On the contrary, other fortresses like Buhen were thoroughly excavated and documented. The Semna border fortress, however, has a series of maps detailing reconstructions of the outer defense system and inner structures found within the fortress walls. This four-part fortress system at Semna likely operated in coordination with one another to ensure the safety of Egypt's territory at the Second Cataract. These defenses not only covered movement on the Nile, but also enforced Nubian immigration via road systems on land.⁶³ Senwosret III set up the Semna border fortresses as the strongest form of protection to the Egyptian border.

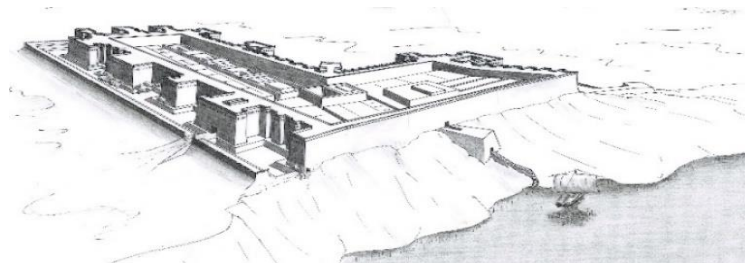


Figure 5: Semna-West Border Fortress

⁶² Vercoutter, J. (1980). Flooded Fortresses Of Nubia. *UNESCO COURIER*, (2), 62-65.

⁶³ Knoblauch, C., & Raue, D. (2019). Middle Kingdom fortresses. *Handbook of Nubia*, 367-91.

Chapter 7

Semna Boundary Stela

The Semna boundary stela of Senwosret III is one of few examples of a nearly in-tact boundary stela from the Middle Kingdom. Boundary stelae were erected by the king to mark the border of the nation's territory and to warn foreigners from entering into the king's land and to boast of his power. They are often inscribed with details of the ruling pharaoh's power over his enemies and protection from patron deities. The discovery of the Semna boundary stela occurred in 1844 during an archaeological expedition by Karl Richard Lepsius.⁶⁴ Upon its recovery, the stela already showed signs of damage with its top half separated from the bottom portion. Lepsius and his team left the upper half of the stela on the banks of the Second Cataract of the Nile.⁶⁵ In 1886, forty years after its initial discovery, J. H. Insinger and his team of excavators located the missing part of the stela, finally allowing researchers to join the halves together and move towards translating the message engraved on the stone.⁶⁶ The stela now resides in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin.

The stela itself is made from brown sandstone; a common building material used during the Middle Kingdom period of Egypt. It measures 160 centimeters in height, 97 centimeters in width, and 28 centimeters in length.⁶⁷ The decree begins with an inscription of the royal titulary of Senwosret III, allowing the pharaoh to attach himself to the proclamation that appears underneath. The royal titulary also alerts those who encounter the stela of its importance

⁶⁴ Vogel, C. (2011). This far and not a step further! The ideological concept of Ancient Egyptian boundary stelae. In *Egypt, Canaan and Israel: History, Imperialism, Ideology and Literature* (pp. 320-341). Brill.

⁶⁵ Janssen, J. M. (1953). The Stela (Khartoum Museum No. 3) from Uronarti. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 12(1), 51-55.

⁶⁶ IBID.

⁶⁷ Dimensions of the stela taken from the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

and contributes to the overall image of the king as an intimidating ruler. The text consists of nineteen lines, read from right to left, in the Middle Egyptian dialect. Unfortunately for translators, the left corner of the stela is no longer attached which makes lines twelve through nineteen incomplete and open to interpretation.

The stela once stood near the southern border of the Second Cataract of the Nile near the Semna and Kumna border fortresses. However, the specific location of the Semna boundary stela during the Middle Kingdom era is a topic of discussion among Egyptologists. Richard Parkinson, a famous British archaeologist, argues that the stela originally existed as part of a shrine in the Semna border fortress along the Egyptian-Nubian border.⁶⁸ Upon its discovery, Lepsius failed to record the context in which he found the stela. The original purpose, and thus location, of the stela might be determined by the content of the message upon the stela or through an analysis of the isotopes that reside in the brown sandstone rock. The isotopic analysis oftentimes reveals specific signatures that attribute the composition of the rock to a specific area.



Figure 6: Semna Boundary Stela

⁶⁸ Vogel, 2011.

Translation

The translation⁶⁹ of the Semna boundary stela of Senwosret III is first converted from Middle Egyptian hieroglyphs into transliterations then into the English translation as follows:

1) *ʿnh hrw ntri hprw nbti ntri mswt nswt bitī ḥʿi-k3w-Rʿ di ʿnh*

Live Horus: God of Manifestation; Two Ladies: God of Offspring; The King of Upper and Lower Egypt: Khakaure, given life.

2) *ʿnh hrw-nbw hpr s3 Rʿ n ḥtf mrf nb t3wi S-n-Wsrt di ʿnh dd w3s dt*

Live Golden Horus of Manifestation; Son of Re, of his body, his beloved, Lord of the Two Lands; Senwosret, given life, stability, and dominion.

3) *ḥsbt 16 3 prt irt ḥmf t3š rsi r ḥh*

Regnal year 16, the third season of Growing His Majesty established the southern border at Heh (Semna).

4) *iw ir-n-i t3š-i ḥnt-i itiw-i*

I established my border, having gone farther south than my fathers.

5) *iw rdi-n-i ḥʿw-hr swdt n-i ink nswt ddw irrw k3zt*

I did more than what was entrusted to me. I am a king who speaks and acts.

6) *ib-i pw ḥprt mʿ-i 3dw r itt ḥmw r*

It is what I make happen in my heart, aggressive to overcome, hasty to

7) *mʿr tm sdr mdt m ib-f ḥmt tw3w ḥʿ hr*

⁶⁹ Translation notes taken from Mark-Jan Nederhof, based on the transcriptions taken from C.R. Lepsius. Grammar notes taken from James Hoch's *Middle Egyptian Grammar*.

succeed. One who does not slumber with a matter in his heart, without standing up against
inferiors.

8) *sf tm sfnw n hrwy ph sw phw ph-t(w)f grw grt*

Merciless to the enemy who attacks him, he attacks the one who would attack, he is motionless
when he is silent,⁷⁰

9) *wšbw mdt mi hpr im-s dr ntt ir gr m ht ph sshm*

who responds to a matter according to what fits it. For to be motionless after an attack is to
strengthen

10) *ib pw n hrwy knt pw 3d hst pw hm-ht hm pw m3^c*

the heart of the enemy. Aggression is bravery, to retreat is vile. The one who is driven from his
border

11) *3rw hr t3šf dr ntt sdm nhsı r hr n r in*

is truly a coward. For the Nubians hear but a word by

12) *wšbf dd hm-f 3d-t(w) rf ddf s3f hm-ht-(tw) w3f r 3d*

answering him, he is retreating. If one acts aggressively towards him, he runs away.

13) *n rmt is nt šft ft hwrw pw sdw ibw iw*

They are not men of worth. They are wretched with broken hearts.

14) *m33-n st hm-f nn iwms h3k-n-i hmwt-sn in-n-i*

His Majesty has seen them, it is not a lie. I captured their women, I carried away

15) *hrw-sn pr r hnmwt-sn hw ihw-sn wh3 sš-sn*

their chattels, went to their wells, drove away their cattle, cut down their barley,

⁷⁰ The word 'silent' is taken from Nederhof's vocabulary list: <https://mjn.host.cs.st-andrews.ac.uk/egyptian/texts/corpus/pdf/SecondSemnehSesostrisIII.pdf>

16) *rdi sdt im 'nh n-i iti-i dd-i m m3't nn hn im*

set fire to it. As my father lives for me, I speak with truth, there is no boasting therein

17) *n'b' pr m r-i ir grt s3-i nb srwdt-i f t3š*

that comes forth from my mouth. Indeed, as for any son of mine who shall keep

18) *pn ir-n hm f s3-i pw ms t(w) f n hm twt s3-i ndti iti f*

this border that My Majesty established, he is my son, born to My Majesty. It is good for a son

that he be the champion of his father.

19) *srwd t3š wtt sw ir grt fht(i) f sw tmt-i f 'h3*

who causes the border of the one who gave it to him to flourish. As to him who shall lose it, who

shall not fight

20) *hr f n s3-i is n ms t(w) f is n-i ist grt rdi-n hm ir-tw pw twt*

for it, he is not my son, he was not born from me. Indeed, My Majesty has a likeness

21) *n hm-i hr t3š pn ir-n hm n mrwt rwd-tn hr f n mrwt 'h3-tn hr f*

of My Majesty placed at this border that My Majesty established, so that you will keep it and so

that you will fight for it.

Commentary

The Semna boundary stela declares unique information about king Senwosret III's character, how the people of Egypt viewed him, and the way in which he sought to present himself to the Nubians. The stela begins with a call to the god Horus and the Two Ladies, presumably the goddesses Wadjet and Nekhbet. This acknowledgment illustrates the gods and goddesses that are notably attributed to the Middle Kingdom and, thus, the ones whom

Senwosret III felt needed recognition on the stela. The religious titles given to Horus and the Two Ladies are the God of Manifestation and the God of Offspring. King Senwosret III is calling upon these gods to assist him in putting a physical manifestation of Egypt's presence in Nubia and multiplying their offspring in the land. Egypt's religious pantheon is expansive, but I believe that Senwosret III chose these two deities because they best fit his purpose for invading Nubia: multiplying Egyptian occupation.

Senwosret III establishes his credibility within the first three lines, stating that he is given life, stability, and dominion by Golden Horus. Therefore, the gods have ordained that Senwosret III possesses the ability to dominate other countries, namely Nubia. He uses this information to dictate his authority to those reading the boundary stela. In Egyptian tradition, pharaohs often started royal inscriptions with blessings of the gods to reinforce their power. This endorsement shows that Senwosret III believes that it is under the commandment of the gods to establish the southern border at Semna. This also makes it harder for outside rulers to question Senwosret III's claim to the border territory.

In the fourth line, the point of view shifts from the third person into the first-person, presumably from the standpoint of Senwosret III himself. He emphasizes that he secured the southern boundary territory farther south than his forefathers. He went above and beyond his duty as the pharaoh by controlling the Second Cataract and constructing a series of border fortresses. Senwosret III clearly sees himself as a man of action. This inscription creates the image of Senwosret III as a self-confident leader who greatly surpassed his predecessors. Ironically, Senwosret III likely erected his series of border fortresses off of the foundations laid by Senwosret I. In this case, Senwosret III's exaggerations are brought to light. This serves as an

example of the pharaonic style of writing- meaning that pharaohs often overstate the true weight of their actions and achievements.

The Semna boundary stela blatantly reveals how the Egyptians viewed the Nubians.⁷¹ Senwosret III views himself as a brave military leader who is aggressive yet strategic. The way in which the king is described illuminates the qualities that Egyptians revere in a leader of their armed forces. Senwosret III prides himself on the aggression that he targets toward the Nubians, which sits in stark contrast to the cowardly Nubians who retreat from conflict. It is evident from the stela⁷² that Senwosret III is skilled in warfare and willing to protect Egypt at great costs. The Nubians, at least in this context, serve as the primary threat to Senwosret III and Egypt at the southern border. Even though the stela takes much of their agency away, Senwosret III obviously holds on to some fear about the Nubians and their ability to invade Egypt. He uses this platform almost as a way to physically remind himself and his country that Egypt is stronger and more aggressive than their southern neighbors.

The authorship behind the Semna boundary stela is one point of discussion among scholars. It is clear that king Senwosret III is the primary subject of the stela, but it is unclear whether he influenced the words of his scribe or whether the scribe wrote independently. The stela matches the general outline of the scribal tradition of the Middle Kingdom, but I suggest that Senwosret III dictated his words to the scribe based on the pronoun usage and the content of the message. Throughout the text, the point of view undergoes several transitions from the first-person to the third-person. The purpose of using the first-person standpoint, however, changes from description to instruction.

⁷¹ This point is referring to lines 8-13 of the Semna Boundary Stela translation.

⁷² Lines 8-10.

The first three lines are written from an objective third-person perspective, simply stating facts about the king's affiliations with certain gods and his authority as a leader. Immediately, the text switches into the first person, presumably from Senwosret III's viewpoint. This continues for the next three lines⁷³ with a description of the king's accomplishments at the Semna border. The words that appear at this point come from Senwosret himself, which suggests that he played a role in creating the inscription. Following the opening lines, the structure looks as though the king directed the scribe's words to create what exists today as a direct quotation. The king's thoughts usher in another transition from lines seven through fourteen, which come from the third-person omniscient point of view.

The matter-of-fact description⁷⁴ both portrays the relationship that Senwosret III has with Nubia as a ruler and applies to the greater Egyptian people. When referencing Nubia, the general population is addressed, not a single leader or government entity. This is partially due to the disorganized political system that existed in Nubia, but it also creates a parallel between Nubians and Egyptians. Although the third-person singular pronoun 'he' appears in regards to the Egyptian perspective, the Nubians are also described using this same pronoun.⁷⁵ For this reason, I believe that the stela is relevant to both Senwosret III and the general Egyptian population against Nubia. Thus, the stela connects those of the elite class to the common citizens in their joint dispute with the "wretched"⁷⁶ Nubians.

The second half of the fourteenth line introduces another offset quotation from Senwosret III. I wish to describe this as another example of a quotation because the previous lines introduce

⁷³ Lines 4-6.

⁷⁴ Lines 7-14.

⁷⁵ In line 12, the Nubians are referred to using the pronouns 'he' and 'him.'

⁷⁶ Line 13.

Senwosret's relationship with Nubia before providing a commentary of his own thoughts about his activities in the south. He speaks with dignity, paying particular attention to the things that he took away from the Nubians. Lines sixteen and seventeen reveal one reason that supports why this portion arguably comes from Senwosret III's own decree. Senwosret III makes a declaration that he speaks with truth and a lack of boasting in his accomplishments.⁷⁷ This indicates that Senwosret III wishes to present himself as an honest and trustworthy commander. I think this comment further adds to his dynamic personality by setting him apart from his forefathers and the scribal tradition at this time. Senwosret III wants to shape the way his people and outsiders view his territorial expansion into Semna: as a feature of his inherent power, not of scribal exaggeration.

In the Middle Kingdom, Instructions are a feature of Egyptian literature when a father passes advice down to his son. An example of this can be found in the last portion of this boundary stela.⁷⁸ Senwosret III is speaking to his son, presumably his future heir Amenemhet III, about keeping the border that he already established. He instructs his son to protect the border, that it may flourish after Senwosret III leaves the throne. He also warns that he will not recognize a son who loses control of the boundary. The final line of the boundary stela discloses that the purpose of erecting it is to remind successors of Senwosret's frontier and the importance of its upkeep. Senwosret III and the Egyptians clearly attach honor to maintenance of territory, enough so, that a father is willing to disown his offspring. Senwosret III prioritizes his role as an esteemed pharaoh over his role as a loving father.

⁷⁷ Lines 16 and 17.

⁷⁸ Lines 17-21.

The Semna boundary stela tells the story of Senwosret III, his relationship with the Nubians, and the decree that he left to his successor. It is evident that the king wanted to be revered for the honor, aggression, and confidence of his decisions regarding Nubia. Senwosret III, unlike his predecessors, fully established the boundary at Semna and left a reminder of this great accomplishment for future generations. I believe that this inscription was written in conjunction with Senwosret III's own words and with those of his scribe. This is supported throughout the text, as it is apparent that Senwosret III prided himself on his ability to speak and act on his own accord. Ultimately, the Semna boundary stela preserved the words of Senwosret III so that we may understand more about him today.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Senwosret III and the foreign policy that he enacted during the Middle Kingdom is relevant even in the modern political climate. Today, international affairs seek to resolve issues such as border disputes, economic development, global markets, and other areas of conflict that occur between different nations. By looking back on ancient civilizations, patterns of human interactions in response to conflict are revealed. Senwosret III erected the line of defensive border fortresses along the Egyptian-Nubian border. This strategy can still be seen today with regards to President Trump and his desire to build a wall between the United States and Mexico. The purpose of this wall is to keep the neighboring nation from freely crossing the border, a sentiment that Senwosret III shared about the Nubians. In order to better understand President Trump's desires, it is plausible to look to Senwosret III for insight.

Egypt's relationship with Nubia serves as an exemplary case study that evaluates the effectiveness of certain foreign policy strategies, especially under Senwosret III. The Semna boundary stela and the border fortress are both physical examples of how Senwosret III chose to protect Egyptian territory against the backdrop of thousands of years of interaction. According to Nubian tradition, Senwosret III acted peaceably, enough so to make him a recognized deity, and ended a long period of conflict. While he continued to send military campaigns throughout Nubia, Senwosret III's foreign policies created a different environment that ceased the political uprisings and civil dissent. For this reason, the foreign policy of the Twelfth Dynasty is significant in today's political climate.

The decisions that leaders make in terms of international politics affect social, economic, and cultural spheres for all nations involved. Egypt and Nubia's influence on each other allowed

them to grow out of their ancient relationship into the modern relationship that exists between Egypt and Sudan. By turning back to the Middle Kingdom era, years of cultural, political, economic, and social impacts define the way in which the Egyptian government and the Sudanese government resolve conflict. The lineage of Egypt's ancient international associations also contributes to an explanation of Egypt's current political standing with other powerful nations.

Senwosret III greatly impacted the trajectory of Egypt's international affairs with the enactment of his foreign policy legislation, the construction of border fortresses, and the erection of boundary stele. He protected the Egyptian people and exercised his military power over the settlements of Nubia. Senwosret III established his legacy as a strong political leader during the Middle Kingdom because he helped maintain economic stability and upheld political dominance over his enemies. The Semna boundary stela further supports that Senwosret III continued fulfilling the goals of his forefathers while keeping the Egyptian people content. The international relationship between Egypt and Nubia during the Middle Kingdom does indeed carry significance in the way in which Egypt perpetuates their international relationships today.

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ACADEMIC VITA

Research Interests

- International Affairs in Antiquity, International Communications

Education

HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA | MAY 2016 | FAIRLAND HIGH SCHOOL

- Major: College Prep and Advanced Placement programs
- Related coursework: Additional online classes

BA, ANTHROPOLOGY | MAY 2020 | THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

- Major: Anthropology
- Minor: Spanish

BA, CLASSICS AND ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES | MAY 2020 | THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

- Major: Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies
- Honors
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Skills & Abilities

COMPUTER SKILLS

- Basic Excel functions
- Data entry
- Google Drive
- Microsoft Office
- Research Skills

LANGUAGE SKILLS

- Proficient in Spanish (written and oral)

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

- Fall Service Day with DiscipleMakers
- Lab Research in the Anthropology Department
- Week of Service at Young Life Camp- Asheville, NC

TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

- Extensive travel experience in Costa Rica, Peru, Spain, Mexico, Honduras, Belize, Greece, Egypt, Japan, Panama, Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico

LEADERSHIP

- Secretary of the Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies Club

- Student Bible Studies on Campus
- Certified Starbucks Barista
- International Internship with DiscipleMakers
- Member of Schreyer Honors College
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Work Experience

BARISTA | STARBUCKS | OCTOBER 2017-PRESENT

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