CHAPTER TWO
POSSIBLE CONTACTS WITH EGYPT BEFORE THE FIRST MILLENNIUM

EASTERN MATERIAL IN THE PENINSULA BEFORE THE PHOENICIAN COLONIZATION

Almost nothing can yet really be said about the possible relations, direct or indirect, of Egypt with the western basin of the Mediterranean. Egyptian sources remain absolutely silent on the subject. All they do vouch for is the existence of relations with pre-Hellenic Greece, with the Achaean or Mycenean world,\(^1\) relations which are also attested archaeologically by objects of Cretan or Aegean origin found in Egypt.\(^2\) Correspondingly, there is Mycenean evidence of relations with Pharaonic Egypt,\(^3\) which we see reflected also in the allusions to Egypt in the Homeric poems.\(^4\)

In the Iberian Peninsula objects of possible Egyptian provenance or more generally of Near Eastern provenance are very scarce indeed before the year 1000. Before the Bronze Age, in fact, the most that can be asserted is a probable Near Eastern influence in certain categories of objects, like the flint knives from the Cova de la Font del Molinot in the Penedès region (Barcelona), from El Cau d'En Serra de Picamoixons (Tarragona), and from Le Trou de Viviers, with fine symmetrical ripple-flaking like those, we are told, of the Neolithic Egyptian flint industry.\(^5\) We may also recall here the Neolithic marble arm bands, some of which have been found in Catalonia (la Valldany), others in Languedoc and the south-east of the Iberian Peninsula, objects which also have distant parallels in Egypt. Then there are the arm bands of *pectunculus* shell\(^6\) and the small steatite beads frequently

---

5 Cura, Ferran y Padró, *VII CIEP*.
6 Pericot, *ACFABA*, III, pp. 5ff. We here thank Dr. L. Pericot for his valuable information.
found in great numbers in megalithic tombs,\(^7\) both elements for which Pericot years ago suggested an eastern origin.

More specific, although also more scarce, are the finds of composition beads. One of these, of discoid type, comes from the megalithic tomb of Cal Colau (Valldarques) (Pl. XXIII),\(^8\) another from the dolmen of La Cova d’En Daina (Romanyà de la Selva),\(^9\) two more from the megalith of Puig ses Forques (Calonge),\(^10\) another from the Branguli megalith, La Cova del Camp de la Marunya (Enveig) (Pl. XXII), and some shapeless fragments of composition from the Dolmen de la Borda (Eina),\(^11\) these last two in the Cerdanya region. The beads are clearly of Egyptian type, and some of them are even decorated with an eye pattern, inlaid with glass of different colours. All the same, they are fairly plentiful in Europe, and this has given rise to suggestions of local manufacture, even in Britain, which does not seem to us very likely.\(^12\) Besides these discoid beads, we must mention the two of segmented tube type found recently in the Cave-Sepulchre of La Roca del Frare (La Llacuna) (Pl. XXIV,1).\(^13\)

Together with the finds of composition beads we must mention the amber beads which it is also suggested may be of Near Eastern origin. Amber beads appear in certain sepulchral and inhabited caves in Catalonia, as well as in the following megalithic tombs: Dolmen I del Bosc (Correà), La Fossa del Gegant (Linya), La Cabana del Moro de Colomera (Organyà), La Pedra Cabana (El Vilar de Cabó), Bullons (Riner), and Can Bosch de Basea (Terrassa).\(^14\)

Of particular interest for its decorative theme is a discoid bead made of a clay paste with a great deal of iron in its composition, with a central perforation and an eye represented on both sides in such a way that the pupil coincides with the hole. This bead comes from the Dolmen del Bosc in Correà and was found together with twenty pieces

---

\(^8\) Cura, *Ampurias*, 35, pp. 213ff. Our thanks are here due to our team mate J. Rovira for his help in putting together the data for this chapter.
\(^9\) Esteva, *Las Gabarras*, I, F. 4, fig. 34.
\(^11\) Padró, Cura y Abelnet, *Cerdanya*, F. 14, fig. 7, and F. 24.
\(^12\) Stone and Thomas, *PPSoc.*, XXII, pp. 37ff.
\(^13\) Harrison, Marti and Giró, *MMitt.*, 15, pp. 95ff., fig. 1.
\(^14\) Rovira, *VII CIEP.*