



TOWARD PINPOINTING THE TIMING OF THE EGYPTIAN ABANDONMENT OF AVARIS DURING THE MIDDLE OF THE 18TH DYNASTY

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In recent years the palatial district of an 18th-Dynasty royal city and a Hyksos citadel prior to the native-Egyptian conquest of the site has been excavated at Avaris (eastern Nile Delta) by an Austrian team of archaeologists. There has been a number of outstanding finds made in the site's Area H, including the remains of impressive monumental architecture, fragments of Minoan fresco paintings, and atypical burials of both humans and animals. Recent publications by Manfred Bietak and the Austrian team have contributed greatly to a proper understanding of the relations between Egypt and the Mediterranean world, have provided insight on 2nd-millennium-BC chronology of the ancient Near East, and have solidified Avaris as the correct choice for the location of Peru-nefer, Egypt's crucial naval base of the 18th Dynasty.

While the excavators have done a tremendous job of publishing both carefully and expediently on the enormous wealth of material they have uncovered at Avaris, they simply have not had the opportunity to solve every question related to their finds. One such question that as of yet has not received a large amount of attention, and has yet to be clarified, is the precise timing of the abandonment of the site after the Thutmose period, which barren phase is synonymous with Stratum b/c at Ezbet Helmi.

Various statements in Bietak's publications can be understood to imply that Avaris/Peru-nefer was deserted either (1) during the reign of Amenhotep II, (2) at the transition from

the reign of Amenhotep II to that of Thutmose IV, or (3) sometime during the reign of Thutmose IV. The reoccupation of the site indisputably transpired during the early stages of the Amarna Age, in the final years of Amenhotep III's reign. Solving the question of just when the site was abandoned may have important implications for why Avaris was abandoned, and for understanding the fate of the Egyptian empire that had experienced its floruit under the long and glorious reign of Thutmose III, the unsurpassed icon of ancient Egyptian imperialism.

The only archaeological feature that the excavators attribute to the period of the hiatus is the carefully but briefly performed burials of cattle, sheep, goats, dogs, and humans that were found scattered throughout the palatial district. The contention of the present writer is that these burials are the key to understanding when Avaris was evacuated, and that textual and pictorial witnesses to the biographies of Amenhotep II and Thutmose IV function to corroborate with the archaeological evidence in order to confirm the conclusion derived from the spade.

A detailed study of the timing of the mid-18th-Dynasty abandonment of Avaris/Peru-nefer authored by Douglas Petrovich ("Toward Pinpointing the Timing of the Egyptian Abandonment of Avaris during the Middle of the 18th Dynasty") is in submission with the *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 5/2 (2013).