



GIFT EXCHANGE AND SEABORNE CONTACT IN EIGHTEENTH DYNASTY EGYPT: THE CASE OF KEFTIU ARTISTS AT TELL EL-DAB'A (AVARIS)

John Tristan Barnes
University of Missouri

ABSTRACT

Public acquisition and display of imported prestige goods was a well-recognized method by which Egyptian and wider Near Eastern rulers established status in their own societies and negotiated their place among royal peers. Fresco fragments from the palaces at Tell el-Dab'a (ancient Avaris), constructed and painted in an Aegean technique, suggest that monumental wall decoration was used in this manner as well. Trade and exchange routes between the Aegean and Egypt have been discussed since the time of Arthur Evans's excavations at Knossos. These discussions have focused primarily on objects and the political-religious ideas behind artistic expression moving in both directions; however, since walls cannot move, in this case it is the artists who painted them that must have traveled. It is argued here that Aegean fresco artists were imported to work at Tell el-Dab'a through a process of royal gift exchange, which was negotiated via existing sea routes between the Aegean and Egypt.

Excavations at Tell el-Dab'a (Avaris) on the extinct Pelusiac branch of the Nile have been the focus of much debate in recent discussions of Egyptian-Aegean interconnections. The discovery, in 1990, of fragments of painted plaster that display Aegean artistic styles and Aegean production techniques initiated a whirlwind of discussion as to their creation and their creators alike.¹ These fragments were recovered from ancient dumps in the vicinities of the entrance-ramps to Palaces F and G (Figure 1), although an in situ section of painted plaster was found in a doorway in Palace G.² Because the paintings were found in dumps in a stratigraphically complicated site, the initial dating of the fragments was unclear, ranging from the end of the Hyksos period to the early Thutmosid period; however, recent evaluation is persuasive in assigning a date sometime during the reigns of Thutmose III or Amenhotep II.³ This later date is corroborated by the in situ findspot in Palace G, as well as the discovery, in 2001, of lime basins, murex shells, and the remains of pigments on the ancient riverbank near Palace F that match the inclusions and construction of the Aegean-style paintings.⁴ Manfred Bietak dates the basins stratigraphically to the latter part of the early Eighteenth Dynasty and associates them with the palace paintings as preparation areas for the fresco material and the paint pigments used in the palaces.

Not all of the painted plaster recovered from Tell el-Dab'a shows Aegean influence, as typically Egyptian fragments of mud plaster with blue paint illustrate; however, the wall and floor

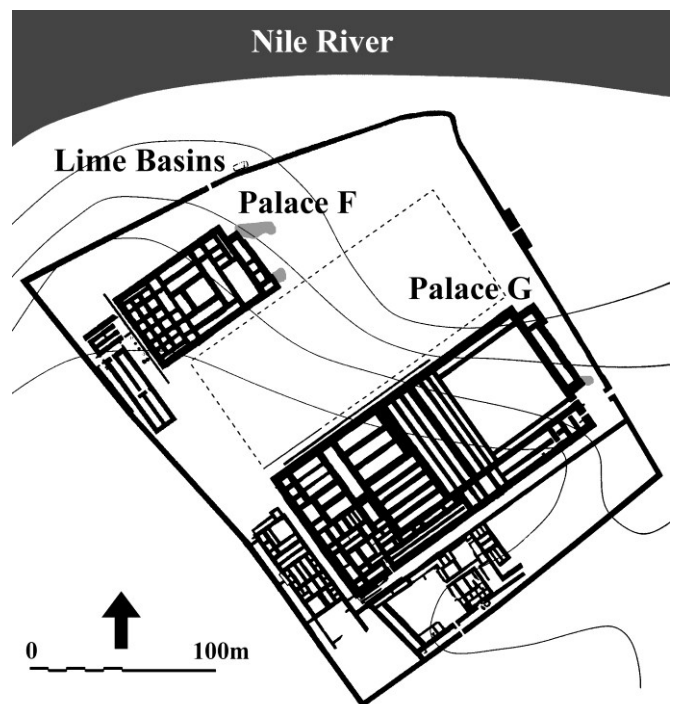


Figure 1: Reconstructed plan of the Thutmosid palaces at Tell el-Dab'a, gray areas indicate the findspots of Aegean fresco fragments, after Bietak et al. 2007, figure 13



Figure 2: Map of the eastern Mediterranean showing sites mentioned in the text

plaster recovered from the dumps around Palaces F and G have undergone intensive stylistic and technical analysis and are generally agreed to be of Aegean inspiration. The focus of the present manuscript does not permit a comprehensive examination of all motifs and techniques present in the painted plaster at the site, but a summary shows clear Aegean influence.⁵ The existence of certain color conventions, such as the use of blue for plants, shaved human heads, and bulls, in addition to the presence of motifs such as bull-leaping accompanied by half-rosette friezes and maze motifs, ivy borders, griffins, hunting scenes with dogs in the “flying gallop” pose, and “Easter egg” rocks, suggest a strong connection to Aegean artistic prototypes, often in the absence of direct Egyptian parallels.⁶ Likewise, technical analyses of the fragments show the presence of string impressions used as guidelines, the inclusion of ground murex shells in the plaster fabric, and the use of lime plaster with true fresco technique (that is, the paint was applied while the plaster was still wet).⁷ All of these processes are well attested in frescoes throughout Crete and the Aegean, and, although strings were employed as guidelines in Egyptian painting, the specific use at Tell el-Dab’a of gridded guidelines impressed into the wet plaster differs from Egyptian convention. These similarities with the Aegean place the frescoes somewhere around the Late Minoan (LM) IA or IB period of wall painting, although parallels with the motifs range from the Middle Minoan (MM) III to the substantially later bull-leaping scenes at Knossos, which provide comparanda as late as the LM IIIA

period.⁸ Manfred Bietak’s suggested synchronism of Thutmose III and the LM IB period fits the pattern seen in wall paintings at Tell el-Dab’a and in tombs at Thebes but is, as yet, unproven.⁹

The frescoes at Tell el-Dab’a are not wholly beyond the realm of Egyptian visual experience, since bull sports (although not bull-leaping specifically), hunting scenes, and processions are common conventions in wall decorations throughout Egypt. However, in the case of Tell el-Dab’a, it is not simply the style of the figures in the scenes and their borders that evoke Aegean models; the motifs themselves carry ideological weight in both Aegean and Egyptian palaces. Bull-leaping is known in the Aegean from wall-paintings and seals from palatial installations, primarily at Knossos.¹⁰ As a motif, it is unknown in the wider civil sphere, and its absence from sites without direct palatial connections, like Akrotiri on Thera, is telling. Likewise, the half-rosette symbol appears in Aegean wall painting and glyptic as a building decoration on structures that are conventionally interpreted as either a palace or a shrine in close communication with the palace.¹¹ While the exact meaning of the motif is unknown, it seems likely from its artistic and physical contexts that the half-rosette was a symbol of palatial importance, whether that palatial role was political, religious, or both. The precise socio-religious significances of bull-leaping and the half-rosette are still uncertain and are likely to remain so without additional discoveries; however, by near-exclusive association with palatial sites both motifs can be interpreted to bear some palatial importance. As such, their appearance in a palatial context in

Egypt suggests that the decorative program was not imported at random but rather was designed with certain royal ideological messages in mind.¹² Whether these messages were fully Aegean, Egyptian, or a blending of the two is best left to another discussion; still, it seems entirely likely, based on departures from Aegean parallels, that some Egyptian influence was present in the overall program of the wall paintings.¹³

AEGEANS IN THE LATE BRONZE AGE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

The topic of Egyptian-Aegean interconnections during the Bronze Age has been the focus of increasingly intensive scrutiny since the 1980s and has produced numerous studies, conferences, and museum exhibitions.¹⁴ As a result of this scholarship, it is possible to understand the frescoes at Tell el-Dab'a not just in terms of artistic transmission but also in association with contemporary social phenomena, trade, and exchange throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Aegean pottery corresponding to the palatial periods on Crete and the Greek mainland (MM II to Late Minoan/Late Helladic IIIB) has been reported at major trading centers from the Levantine coast to the Egyptian Delta and west to Marsa Matruh, as well as to the south in the Faiyum and the Nile basin.¹⁵ Nevertheless, compared with imports from the Levant or Mesopotamia, relatively few Aegean imports appear in Egypt with dates that range between the MM III and the LM II, the majority of which can be dated to LM IB and are roughly contemporary with the paintings at Tell el-Dab'a.¹⁶ A similar picture emerges in the Aegean, where Egyptian objects are present in Crete before the LM III period but are never common relative to the number of other finds at any given site. During the LM IB period, a brief increase in the number of Egyptian imports can be seen in the Aegean, which range widely in date from Hyksos to early Thutmosid periods.¹⁷ Generally, rates of Aegean imports at Egyptian sites are low, averaging only a few objects per decade until the later Eighteenth Dynasty, when LH IIIB imports increase in frequency, by this time primarily originating in the Greek mainland.¹⁸ Late Minoan/Late Helladic III contexts in the Aegean show a similar resurgence of contact with Egypt. The picture is complicated by the fact that Egyptian imports into the Aegean, specifically those that correspond the Thutmosid period or before, often come from contexts that display signs of multi-period use, as in the case of tombs or palaces, and their transference is difficult to date narrowly. Additionally, the possibility that Egyptian imports were sometimes kept as heirloom objects means that they might have been deposited in the archaeological record long after their manufacture or acquisition.

The material record provides enough evidence of contact to suggest that it occurred, but details are tentative from the Aegean perspective. Egyptian evidence for contact with the Aegean is supported by inscriptions and by wall paintings that show and describe people called the Keftiu, traditionally interpreted to be Aegeans.¹⁹ For example, the much-discussed itinerary from Amenhotep III's mortuary temple at Kom el-Hetan provides

evidence of Egyptian geographical knowledge regarding Crete and the Greek mainland.²⁰ Wall paintings in tombs at Thebes, in particular those of Senmut, Antef, Useramun, Rekhmire, and Menkheperaseneb, all high-ranking officials from the reigns of Hatshepsut/Thutmose III to Amenhotep II, show Keftiu bearing distinctly Aegean-style objects and clad in Aegean-style clothing.²¹ Stylistic parallels for the ceramic and/or metal vessels depicted in the tomb paintings can be found on Crete and the Mycenaean mainland and date primarily from LM IA to LM IB, making them roughly contemporary with the paintings at Tell el-Dab'a.²² Likewise, the style of Keftiu dress is recorded on frescoes and on glyptic and sculpted reliefs throughout the Aegean in both Minoan and Mycenaean contexts.²³ The dates of these depictions in Thebes tie together the frescoes at Tell el-Dab'a and the elevated frequency of imported material in Egypt and the Aegean, all together creating a picture of an elevated level of interest in, and contact with, the Aegean during the Thutmosid period.

The Aegean-style frescoes at Tell el-Dab'a should also be viewed within their larger palatial context, not just within Egypt but also within the wider eastern Mediterranean. Palatial frescoes with Aegean iconography and/or technique are known from Tel Kabri in Israel,²⁴ Alalakh in the Turkish Hatay,²⁵ and most recently Qatna in Syria.²⁶ The wall and floor paintings at these sites show a variety of construction techniques, including true lime frescoes and string impressions as guidelines that display Aegean connections, although all commentators are quick to point out that each site also possesses *al secco* (or dry-painted) plaster and local non-Aegean iconography. Nonetheless, most telling for the Aegean connection is the range of iconographic motifs represented at these Levantine sites that are not directly paralleled in native Near Eastern wall-painting traditions. As seen at Tell el-Dab'a, the use of the color blue to represent foliage, so-called "Easter egg" style rocky shores, Aegean griffins, and riverine landscapes reminiscent of the miniature frescoes in the West House at Akrotiri on Thera all suggest Aegean influence.²⁷ In fact, the only direct parallels for the miniature fresco at Tel Kabri come from Crete and the Cyclades.²⁸ These Levantine examples predate the Aegean decorations at Tell el-Dab'a, finding closer parallels to MM IIIB or LM IA style frescoes in the Aegean. However, like the paintings at Tell el-Dab'a, they all demonstrate Aegean authorship, not simply through the range of motifs but also through construction techniques not otherwise found in Near Eastern tradition and through the importation of ideologically significant sets of images.

TOWARD A HOW AND WHY OF THE AEGEAN PAINTINGS AT TELL EL-DAB'A

The relative scarcity of Aegean material goods in Egypt during the Thutmosid period stands in stark contrast to the richness of the paintings at Tell el-Dab'a and scenes of the Keftiu and their wares in contemporary tomb paintings at Thebes. If Egyptian-Aegean contact was not particularly intensive before the Thutmosid period, then why were Aegean motifs chosen for the

palaces at Tell el-Dab'a? Foreign objects and motifs are not rare in Egyptian or wider Near Eastern palatial settings, and the frequency of such foreign goods is based on the ideological value of their acquisition. As Mary Helms points out, foreign goods are by nature elite goods, and, as such, are inextricably linked with the ideological prestige of both the act of their acquisition and the individual who acquires them.²⁹ One who possesses a foreign object and displays it to others emphasizes his or her ability to marshal the resources necessary to obtain it, both in terms of material wealth and in terms of (often distant) human relationships. The more distant the object's origin, the greater that emphasis becomes. As such, the object might lose its original meanings and acquire new connotations that reflect the needs and perceptions of those people who constitute its new cultural context.³⁰ The object itself has no life of its own but is dependant on the cultural worldview of the people who acquire it and interact with it in its new setting. The foreign object becomes a tool for organizing the world, a proxy for the geography of its origin and the people who produced it.³¹

At a very basic level, the Egyptian worldview was centered on the Nile and the stability that it provided, a stability that was fortified by the ability of the king to maintain order. From the royal perspective, this order was both internal and external, related to both the seasonality of the natural world and to the maintenance of proper relations with the various peoples in the world. In turn, the prestige of a king (and his kingdom) was dependent on the prosperity of its inhabitants and the acknowledged goodwill and esteem of other sovereigns. Proper relations with foreign kings were, therefore, essential to the continuing order and stability of a kingdom. Such relations were maintained by regular communication between rulers through letters and envoys and were accompanied with gifts of varying size and quality, depending on the occasion and the recipient.³² Normal protocol for any diplomatic contact required that the embassy include a gift that would serve as a token to foster personal friendship and esteem between kings, at least on an official level. A gift emphasized the giver's magnanimity and ability to spare material wealth, and it obligated the recipient to respond in due time with a gift of equal or greater value so as not to appear neglectful (and disrespectful by extension), thereby creating a cycle of reciprocal gift exchange. These exchanges, although arranged between individuals, were not private affairs but instead were the focus of much pomp and circumstance as the officials who bore the gifts presented the objects to the recipient king.³³ Although gifts were exchanged on a personal level between royal individuals, they were viewed and interpreted within the larger context of the royal court, particularly the spectacle of the presentation itself. The object was thus transformed through its display from a personal acquisition into a political tool imbued with national significance.

In an Egyptocentric worldview, such gift-laden embassies from foreign rulers could be viewed, and were perhaps encouraged to be viewed, as symbolic supplication, recognition of the sovereignty and divine right of the Egyptian king.³⁴ Therefore, the

objects that participated in these exchanges, as proxies of the kings who sent them and of the peoples who produced them, could be viewed as symbols of domination over foreign kings and foreign lands. Such is the ideological message implied, if not overtly stated, by the scenes of foreign embassies in the Theban tombs. For example, a scene of foreign tribute in the tomb of Menkheperaseneb includes an embassy from the Hittites alongside those from Egyptian vassals in the Levant, an artistic choice that reflects Egyptian political ideology more than political reality. Control of a foreign place, even if only symbolic, allowed that foreign location and the peoples resident within it to be ordered within the cosmos; it located foreign populations within the real and symbolic hierarchies of the known world.³⁵ To abstain from the formal cycles of gift exchange and forgo the possession and display of foreign goods was to risk separating one's self and kingdom from the real world, with all the ideological and political consequences that would follow. Communication, and the material gains that resulted from it, sanctioned a foreign location and brought it within the sphere of formal intercourse, as was befitting of a proper king.³⁶

This sketch of international diplomacy and ideological order is admittedly brief in the interests of space, but it is crucial to the understanding of the Tell el-Dab'a frescoes. In order to answer the question posed at the beginning of this section, as to why look to foreign artistic styles, one must consider the creation of the frescoes in addition to the ideological weight of the iconography; the means of acquisition are just as important as the ideology. While it is possible that artistic motifs could have been transferred via pattern books or verbal descriptions, the techniques of construction, which involved such non-local procedures as lime-plaster fresco with murex-shell inclusions and string-impressed guidelines, suggest that the artisans were not simply familiar with completed Aegean artwork but were trained in the processes of its creation.³⁷ The non-local production techniques make it unlikely that Egyptian artists, if royally commissioned to produce paintings in a foreign style, would have taken the trouble to copy the foreign techniques rather than use familiar local procedures to replicate the exotic forms.³⁸ Additionally, based on evidence from the Amarna archives and other collections of Near Eastern correspondences between royal peers, it does not seem likely that an Egyptian monarch would have commissioned local artists to paint the palaces at Tell el-Dab'a in an Aegean style. Since the act of acquiring a foreign object was just as important in the construction of ideological significance as the appearance of the object, the production of a local copy would lack the weight of symbolic supplication, control, and order, as previously discussed. As Trevor Bryce states, "there were only two honourable ways for a king to acquire precious goods: through receiving them as gifts or tribute, or through booty and plunder."³⁹ Local commissions and ordinary mercantile activity were beneath the station of a king. If local artists are unlikely to have created the paintings, and the walls cannot have been moved, then the fresco artists who were commissioned for the work must have traveled.

The Amarna Letters, among the most useful collection of correspondences for the illustration of royal exchange and acquisition of foreign goods in Egypt, are dated later than the paintings at Tell el-Dab'a, but, taken together with other archives from Hattusa, Ugarit, Mari, and elsewhere, from them a general picture of Late Bronze Age royal correspondence can be extrapolated and applied to the palace at Tell el-Dab'a.⁴⁰ While the Amarna Letters do not mention traveling artists, they do describe the exchange of specialized professionals such as physicians and augurs. Niqm-Adda II of Ugarit requested a physician from Akhenaten, and an unidentified king of Alasiya asked the king of Egypt for an expert in vulture augury.⁴¹ Other Babylonian and Hittite kings also requested Egyptian physicians, who appear to have served as transferable specialists attached to the court, a role similar to that played by palace-dependant artists.⁴² The Mari documents describe specialized craftsmen being sent from the central palace to outlying vassals. Metalworkers,⁴³ leatherworkers,⁴⁴ carpenters,⁴⁵ and masons⁴⁶ appear in communications between rulers and vassals and are documented as being both requested and sent. Occasionally specialists are even requested by name, as in the case of Dani-El,⁴⁷ and in all situations care is taken to ensure that the craftsmen are employed properly. Mukannisum received orders from his master to "give [all the artists he earlier requested] strict orders so they might not be negligent in completing their work."⁴⁸ Sometimes vassals would be ordered by the king to send the specialists on their way when it became apparent that they were idle, and craftsmen can be found filling in for others when tasks went uncompleted.⁴⁹ This pattern of management and palatial commission can be seen on an international scale when the Hittite king Hattusili III requests a sculptor from Kadasman-Enlil II of Babylon for the purpose of placing images in family quarters.⁵⁰ Hattusili III also states "[did I not send back the previous] sculptor, and did he not return to Kadasman-Turgu?" implying that the process of artisan exchange between the Hittites and Babylon was not an unheard of occurrence and dated back at least to the time of Kadasman-Enlil II's father. A letter from Ramesses II to Hattusili III, in which Ramesses requests masons from Anatolia, demonstrates that Egyptian kings also participated in these sorts of exchanges.⁵¹ It is important to note that craftsmen were transferred from one king to another only upon special request; that is, craftsmen were not offered freely unless one king made an explicit request for a specialist. Unlike finished objects, specialists were never surprise gifts.

Artists and craftsmen were more rarely exchanged than the objects they created, perhaps as a measure of safety. Artists at the royal level in the ancient Near East were not itinerant and were almost always attached to a palace in some capacity.⁵² Contemporary documents from multiple archives show that craftsmen of the highest caliber were often jealously guarded, and great care could be taken to ensure that they remained under palatial authority, at times backed by force if necessary. Foreign travel, even under a king's name and sanction, could be a dangerous undertaking, and the eventual return of the specialist

was never certain. In spite of the dangers, specialized craftsmen did travel, according to contemporary sources, but at an international level it seems that only those craftsmen whose work could not be shipped as cargo were allowed to travel themselves. Hittite masons and Egyptian physicians and augurs, for example, would have been required to be on site in the foreign locations in order to perform their duties. From a royal perspective, requesting a foreign specialist provided certain benefits, since any specialist attached to a palace would, by nature, produce work of a palatial quality. Requesting gifts from a foreign king, or the artists to make a desired object, provided a form of quality control, an assurance that what was produced would be up to the standards of a king, an assurance that only another king could grant. Freelance and itinerant craftsmen and specialists would have no such guarantees, and the quality of their finished work could not be assured.

Based on the pattern revealed by contemporary documents, it does not seem likely that an Egyptian king, if desirous of palatial decoration in a foreign style, would have hired itinerant craftsmen or expatriates from within his own kingdom. This act would have lacked both the ideological weight and the quality control of a gift from a foreign king, and such a hiring process for specialists is not directly attested in ancient Near Eastern or Egyptian records. Based on the observed pattern, the painted walls at Tell el-Dab'a are most likely to have been produced by artists brought in from the Aegean who were already experts in their art and who possessed palatial experience. Following the pattern in the texts, these artists would most likely have been specially requested by the Egyptian monarch from a palace center in the Aegean that could be perceived as a royal peer.⁵³ Scholars have associated foreign artists with the paintings at Tell el-Dab'a in various capacities. Most often, Aegean artists have been proposed to have been imported and hired from an expatriate community or from a freely itinerant workshop operating in the Levant or the Nile Delta.⁵⁴ Since gift exchange is dependent on a reciprocal gift, it is difficult to argue for gift exchange as the method of transit for the artists at Tell el-Dab'a in the absence of explicit Aegean evidence.⁵⁵ Manfred Bietak's hypothesis of a royal marriage could account for this exchange, suggesting that the artists travelled with the royal embassy that accompanied the Aegean princess to Egypt; however, while the idea of a marriage between an Aegean princess and a Thutmosid king is consistent with contemporary royal marriage patterns in Egypt, it is difficult to prove and is not altogether consistent with models revealed by contemporary documents.⁵⁶ If an Aegean princess was sent to Egypt, presumably not to become the primary wife of the king, then, based on the current understanding of international royal marriage practices and negotiations, it does not seem likely that two buildings within a palace complex would have been decorated in an artistic style native to the princess's homeland purely for the sake of the princess's comfort.⁵⁷ While it is not clear what a Thutmosid king would have sent to the Aegean as compensation for the gift (or loan) of fresco painters, gift exchange is the only process of specialist acquisition at the royal level that is attested by contemporary documents. As such, it is the only process of royal

acquisition that explains an Aegean artisanal presence inside the palaces at Tell el-Dab'a.

Yet, the question still remains as to why a specifically Aegean style was sought instead of an artistic form from a region more widely recognized and politically vital for Egyptian interests. It should be remembered that contact between Egypt and the Aegean was sparse before the Thutmosid period and royal iconography during the Middle Kingdom does not show evidence of Aegean influence, indicating that the sudden choice of an Aegean style at Tell el-Dab'a does not reflect an attempt at symbolic continuity with the past.⁵⁸ As previously stated, Aegean expatriate communities, itinerant craftsmen, and mercenaries have all been proposed as methods of transmission for Aegean motifs into Egypt, but there has been little physical record of their presence, and, as a result, the existence of such groups in the Delta is largely speculative.⁵⁹ Yves Duhoux's comprehensive analysis of the phrase "islands in the midst of the Great Green," which appears in scenes with the Keftiu in the Theban tombs of Rekhmire and Useramun, provides a possible grounding for these hypotheses, and, therefore, a point of contact between the kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty and the Keftiu. After examining the usage and context of the phrase in its numerous and varied attestations, Duhoux proposes that the phrase does not reference the islands of the Aegean, as it is normally understood, but instead signifies the islands in the Nile Delta that arose during the perennial flooding of the river before modern hydraulic engineering.⁶⁰ The islands, in this case, are specifically traced to the central Delta, which are titled with similar language before and after the Thutmosid period and the Theban tombs. While the word "Keftiu" can still, as traditionally, be understood to represent one or all of the peoples of the Aegean, Duhoux's analysis suggests that the embassies of "Keftiu and the islands in the midst of the Great Green" depicted on the tomb walls in Thebes did not come from the Aegean but came instead from a population of Keftiu living in the Nile Delta. Such a population is, at present, invisible in the archaeological record; however, due to the high water table, millennia of regular flooding and alluviation, and extensive habitation and agricultural use of the land — issues that vex any deltaic excavation — the absence of finds should not be taken too strongly as negative evidence for the existence of local Keftiu activity. After all, the Aegean frescoes at Tell el-Dab'a were unknown before the 1990s. The geological and textual evidence supports such a claim that islands existed in this area during the regular flooding of the Nile, and the phrase used to describe this region of the Delta is consistent as the land "in the midst of the Great Green."

The implications of locating the origins of certain Keftiu embassies in the Nile Delta are intriguing, if speculative. If such an expatriate community existed in the central Delta region, then, as Hyksos control of northern Egypt deteriorated, it would have come into close contact with the Eighteenth Dynasty center at Tell el-Dab'a, which is not far from the eastern edge of the central Delta region. Such a community of foreigners could even have become established in the early years of the Eighteenth Dynasty, perhaps as a demographic side effect of the dynastic transition.⁶¹

Whatever the date of the establishment of the Deltaic Keftiu community, by the reign of Thutmose III it was considered important enough for its embassies to be received by the king and for those embassies to be commemorated on tomb walls of royal officials, both of which are actions that could suggest the Deltaic Keftiu were an important element of the regional population, even if only symbolically. There is no way to speculate on the size of a proposed Keftiu population in the region, but symbolic importance does not need to be related directly to population numbers or density. Expanding Egyptian interests in the eastern Mediterranean during the Thutmosid period, both militarily and politically, required response and adaptation to new peoples and to new geographic realities. The Kom el-Hetan inscription, whether an itinerary and record of an Egyptian embassy to the Aegean or simply a record of Egyptian geographical knowledge, reflects the ordering of new lands and the accompanying symbolic management according to Egyptian worldview. It is only natural that the Egyptians made an effort to account for the Keftiu and establish relations with a people who occupied a distant new frontier of the known world. The decoration of the royal palace at Tell el-Dab'a is an outgrowth of these efforts through the established precepts of royal correspondence—specifically the gift exchange of specialized craftsmen. However, while palatial paintings could have been the result of intermittent royal correspondence, the potential impact of a local community of expatriates should not be overlooked. Initial contact between the emergent Eighteenth Dynasty and the Aegean would most likely have been mediated through overseas ties that would have been maintained between the expatriates and their homeland. Cultural contact would likely have been mediated through the Delta population, and interpreters, the necessary intermediaries of international discourse, could feasibly have been drawn from such a population.

Little is known about the routes of communication between Egypt and the Aegean, although material evidence makes it clear that direct lines of communication were open. Both populations were capable of constructing sturdy vessels able to conduct long-distance, deep-sea travel. Egyptian texts describe long-distance sea voyages, and paintings depict large vessels for trade and transportation. Additionally, the conditions of archaeological preservation in Egypt have permitted both ship models and full-size vessels to survive to the present day. Aegean frescoes at Akrotiri on Thera (slightly earlier than those at Tell el-Dab'a) depict ships of varying size and capacity, and shipwreck sites at Uluburun, Cape Gelidonya, and Point Iria, although all later than the period discussed here, attest the kinds of ships to which Bronze Age Aegean peoples would have had access.⁶² There are cryptic mentions of "Keftiu ships" transporting timber in the annals of Thutmose III and in another document from his reign describing the presence of such ships under construction or repair at the port of *Prow-nfr* in the Nile Delta.⁶³ With only two attestations, care must be taken not to inflate the importance of this type of vessel. Likewise, without more evidence it is not possible to determine if these ships were titled "Keftiu" because they were constructed in

the homeland of the Keftiu, because they were modeled on Keftiu designs, or because they were used to make trading runs to and from Keftiu ports. However, the possibility of a Deltaic Keftiu community raises another option: that these were ships constructed in the Nile Delta by the Keftiu or using their maritime designs. This could, perhaps, account for the presence of such ships at *Prw-nfr*. Whether “Keftiu ships” or not, vessels of Deltaic construction could have been instrumental in maintaining regular contact between the Aegean and the Keftiu community in Egypt, contemporaneous and overlapping with, the more official level of interaction centered at Tell el-Dab’a and represented in the tombs at Thebes.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The Aegean frescoes at Tell el-Dab’a cannot be understood through their iconography alone but must be situated within the royal institutions and procedures of the Egyptian court, which sought to acquire the paintings, and within the local demographic milieu, through which cultural contact and artistic transmission was likely mediated. The proposal to link the Aegean paintings at Tell el-Dab’a with the outline of contact, transmission, and exchange drafted in this paper is admittedly tentative, but it is supported by both archaeological and documentary evidence. To an ancient visitor to the palaces at Tell el-Dab’a, it must have seemed as if Keftiu artisans had adorned the walls in supplication and recognition of the greatness of the Thutmosid kings. This is not a minor consideration. The implication, in visual terms, that the distant Keftiu homeland was under the influence and sway of the Egyptian court can be viewed as an outgrowth of the contemporary expansion of Egyptian power throughout the eastern Mediterranean. The same desire that sent Hatshepsut’s expedition to Punt can be traced through the commission of Aegean artists to come to Tell el-Dab’a. In both situations, the return of foreign assets and the display of objects that signified locations at the edge of the known world show a desire to emphasize the universal power that the Egyptian king embodied. By opening communications with a palace entity in the Aegean, the Egyptian king could claim to legitimize the land and to integrate it within the larger scope of the eastern Mediterranean community, centered on Egypt. By displaying symbols of the Aegean, the Egyptian king could openly exhibit that ideological message to any and all visitors to the palace. Contemporary standards of royal conduct required that foreign objects be acquired through the proper channels of diplomatic communication with other kings; a foreign status symbol within the royal sphere could not simply be purchased, nor could an artist simply be hired. In relation to the Tell el-Dab’a frescoes, the artists must have traveled to create the paintings, and the only method of travel attested by contemporary documents that was available to artists at the royal level was through gift exchange, arranged between the kings themselves.

The Minoan sword of Ahmose at the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty, the palatial frescoes during the Thutmosid

period at Tell el-Dab’a, the scenes of embassies under the reigns of Hatshepsut, Thutmose III, and Amenhotep II with contemporary references to Keftiu ships, and the Kom el-Hetan inscription during the reign of Amenhotep III all attest an increasing level of royal familiarity with the Aegean at least through the middle of the Eighteenth Dynasty.⁶⁴ The cessation of this period of contact has been linked to the appearance of the Mycenaeans on Crete (LM II), although a simpler explanation is equally possible—specifically, as Duhoux states, “*les Minoens avaient cessé d’être en vogue*.”⁶⁵ If official contact with the Aegean Keftiu was so connected to ideological power and control, then, if the Aegean ceased to be a politically useful instrument, continued royal contact may very well have been unnecessary from the Egyptian viewpoint. It is worth noting that, around the end of this period of intensified official contact, the Keftiu join the ranks of the traditional Nine Bow enemies of Egypt, a role in which they can be found in several later tombs at Thebes. A parallel cause for the cessation of official contact, a “falling out of favor,” could be proposed from the Aegean point of view as well. Additionally, it may be that a lack of literacy in the Aegean might have contributed to a breakdown in communication or might have prevented prolonged intensive contact on an official level.⁶⁶ No evidence exists in the contemporary Aegean for knowledge of either the Egyptian or Akkadian language, nor is there evidence that written letters or reciprocal gift exchange played a role in diplomatic protocol, although, admittedly, inter-palatial diplomacy in the Aegean is not well understood. Nonetheless, without an understanding of the diplomatic procedures and language skills that were deemed proper by Egyptian and Near Eastern convention, it is doubtful that the Aegean would have been able to maintain an enduring diplomatic presence in the eastern Mediterranean. A full consideration of the impact on discussions of Aegean kingship in light of foreign relations and gift exchange with a Cretan palace deserves additional research. Aegean kingship before the Mycenaean period is still an unsettled issue, and, although the palaces themselves suggest a centralized rule, there is no general consensus as to the structure, nature, and extent of that rule. Exchange, as would be fitting for an Egyptian king, would have required institutions on Crete that could be recognized as royal from an eastern perspective. Moreover, since exchange was a personal bond between monarchs, it would have required the existence of an individual who could be singled out as a formal king by Egyptian standards. In this case, it is those Egyptian and Near Eastern standards of kingship that are key to understanding the Thutmosid relations with the Aegean.

Nevertheless, in order to open communications with an overseas location, it is first necessary to have knowledge of that distant land. For this initial step, the role of the Keftiu in the central Nile Delta should be given consideration. If such an expatriate community were located near Tell el-Dab’a, then it would certainly have drawn the attention of the Egyptian court as the Eighteenth Dynasty established itself in the region, and it is likely that the Aegean reentered the Egyptian worldview at this point. As Thutmosid power expanded through the eastern

Mediterranean, the Aegean became a viable symbol for dominion at the far corner of the world, perhaps made more appealing by the ready access that the local Keftiu population provided. It is reasonable to assume that a local Keftiu community would have maintained some at least basic ties with its homeland and, as such, could have provided early knowledge about the distant Aegean and supplied both interpreters and guides for early official actions from Egypt. This official level of contact, in turn, entailed

reciprocal exchange, which provided a means for the Aegean fresco artists to travel to Tell el-Dab'a at the request of the Egyptian king. Of course, this chain of events is hypothetical, but it is worth considering the possibility that the royal discourse that led to the commissioning of Aegean frescoes in the palaces at Tell el-Dab'a originated in the seaborne ventures of an expatriate community seeking to maintain ties with its homeland.

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NOTES

- 1 For initial reports of these findings and early discussion of the paintings see, for example, Manfred Bietak, “Minoan Wall-Paintings Unearthed at Ancient Avaris,” *Egyptian Archaeology* 2 (1992): 26–28, “Die Wandmalereien aus Tell el-Dab’a/’Ezbet Helmi: Erste Eindrücke.” *Ägypten und Levante* 4 (1994): 44–58, Manfred Bietak, Irmgard Hein, and Peter Jánosi, “Neue Grabungsergebnisse aus Tell el-Dab’a und ’Ezbet Helmi im östlichen Nildelta 1989–1991,” *Ägypten und Levante* 4 (1994): 9–80; Manfred Bietak and Nanno Marinatos, “The Minoan Wall Paintings from Avaris,” *Ägypten und Levante* 5 (1995): 49–62; Peter Jánosi, “Die Stratigraphische Position und Verteilung der minoischen Wandfragmente in den Grabungsplätzen H/I und H/IV von Tell el-Dab’a.” *Ägypten und Levante* 5 (1995): 63–71; Manfred Bietak, *Avaris. Capital of the Hyksos: Recent Excavations at Tell el-Dab’a* (London: British Museum Press, 1996a); Manfred Bietak, “Le début de la XVIII^e Dynastie et les Minoens à Avaris,” *Bulletin de la Société Française d’Égyptologie* 135 (1996b): 5–29, “Minoan Paintings in Avaris, Egypt,” in Susan Sherratt (ed.), *The Wall Paintings of Thera: Proceedings of the First International Symposium 30 August–4 September 1997*, vol. 1, 33–42 (Athens: Pergamos S.A., 2000a); Manfred Bietak and Nanno Marinatos, “Avaris and the Minoan World,” in Alexandra Karetsou and Maria Andreadaki-Vlazaki (eds.), *Krete-Aigytos: Politismikoi desmoi trion chiletion*, 40–44 (Athens: Hypourgeio Politismou, 2000); Manfred Bietak, “The Setting of the Minoan Wall Paintings at Avaris,” in Lydia Morgan (ed.), *Aegean Wall Painting: A Tribute to Mark Cameron*, 83–90 (London: British School at Athens, 2005).
- For an illustration of the early (often contentious) debate surrounding the wall paintings see Eric Cline, “Rich Beyond the Dreams of Avaris: Tell el-Dab’a and the Aegean World – A Guide for the Perplexed,” *Annual of the British School at Athens* 93 (1998): 199–219, and the reply: Manfred Bietak, “‘Rich Beyond the Dreams of Avaris: Tell el-Dab’a and the Aegean World – A Guide for the Perplexed.’ A Response to Eric H. Cline.” *Annual of the British School at Athens* 95 (2000b): 185–205.
- The term “Aegean” will be used in this manuscript to denote any style, people, or geography encompassing the islands of the Aegean Sea, Crete, and the modern Greek mainland. The identification of the style of the paintings here as “Aegean” is intended to sidestep the issue of more specific Cretan/Minoan/Cycladic authorship. Uncertainty is inherent with the present fragmentary state of knowledge about the development of Aegean wall painting, and it may not be possible to pinpoint specifically the geographic origin of motifs or peoples without additional evidence.
- Manfred Bietak, Nanno Marinatos, and Clairry Palyvou, *Tauredor Scenes in Tell el-Dab’a (Avaris) and Knossos* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 26–40. Bietak’s suggestion that the fragments were buried after flaking off of the wall is appealing.
- Bietak 1994, 44; 2005, 83; Bietak et al. 2007, 27.
- Bietak et al. 2007, 38–39.
- A complete comprehensive collection of all Aegean paintings from Avaris is not yet available; however, for more detailed descriptions of the paintings see Bietak and Marinatos 1995; Bietak et al. 2007; John Barnes, “Painting the Wine-Dark Sea: Travelling Aegean Fresco Artists in the Middle and Late Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean” (master’s thesis, University of Missouri, 2008), 12–21, 121–129; Nanno Marinatos, “Lions from Tell el-Dab’a,” *Ägypten und Levante* 20 (2010): 325–356; Lydia Morgan, “A Pride of Leopards: A Unique Aspect of the Hunt Frieze from Tell el-Dab’a,” *Ägypten und Levante* 20 (2010a): 263–302; Lydia Morgan, “An Aegean Griffin in Egypt: The Hunt Frieze at Tell el-Dab’a,” *Ägypten und Levante* 20 (2010b): 303–324.
- Bietak and Marinatos 1995, 2000; Cline 1998; Manfred Bietak, Nanno Marinatos, and Clairry Palyvou, “The Maze Tableau from Tell el-Dab’a,” in Susan Sherratt (ed.), *The Wall Paintings of Thera: Proceedings of the First International Symposium 30 August–4 September 1997*, vol. 1, 77–90 (Athens: Pergamos S.A., 2000); Bietak 2000a, 2005; Bietak et al. 2007, 67–86; Barnes 2008, 12–21, 34–66.
- Rudolfine Seeber, “The Technique of Plaster Preparation for the Minoan Wall-Paintings at Tell el-Dab’a,” in Susan Sherratt (ed.), *The Wall Paintings of Thera: Proceedings of*

- the First International Symposium 30 August–4 September 1997*, vol. 1, 91–102 (Athens: Pergamos S.A., 2000); Bietak et al. 2007, 47–48, 68–69, 151–162; Barnes 2008, 59–66.
- ⁸ Bietak et al. 2007, 67–68, 85–86. Numerous other studies have weighed in on the chronology issue; I only present the excavator’s most recent and convincing chronology here for the sake of space.
- ⁹ The comparative chronologies are uncertain, and a link between Thutmose III and the LM IB is not certain. At present, the High Aegean Chronology favored by scientific testing in the Aegean and the Egyptian Low Chronology favored by Bietak at Avaris are not easily compatible, and review of the standard chronologies is needed in order to resolve the chronological differences of up to a century between the two regions. See Barnes 2008, 165–172 for a very brief introduction with specific reference to the wall paintings. For this reason, absolute dates will be avoided in this manuscript, although the synchronism between Thutmose III and the LM IB will be used throughout.
- ¹⁰ On bull-leaping and its ideology see the studies by Marinatos and Palyvou in Bietak et al. 2007, 115–132.
- ¹¹ See Marinatos in Bietak et al. 2007, 145–150. Marinatos’s assertion that the half-rossette should be connected to a Minoan solar goddess because of Syrian parallels is not without problems. Whatever its specific meaning, it seems likely that the motif should be connected to palatial and/or state ritual functions on Crete; see Barnes 2008, 42–44.
- ¹² See also Bietak and Marinatos 1995, 61; 2000, 44. It is difficult to imagine that any palatial decorative program would have been cobbled together at random; an ideological impact is only to be expected.
- ¹³ See, for example, Maria Shaw, “Bull Leaping Frescoes at Knossos and their Influence on the Tell el-Dab’a Murals,” *Ägypten und Levante* 5 (1995): 91–120; she renews her arguments in “A Bull-Leaping Fresco from the Nile Delta and a Search for Patrons and Artists,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 113 (2009): 471–477.
- ¹⁴ See, for example, Barry Kemp and Robert Merrillees, *Minoan Pottery in Second Millennium Egypt* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1980); Shelly Wachsmann, *Aegeans in the Theban Tombs* (Leuven: Peeters, 1987); Janice Crowley, *The Aegean and the East: An Investigation into the Transference of Artistic Motifs between the Aegean, Egypt and the Near East in the Bronze Age* (Jonsered: Åströms, 1989); Connie Lambrou-Phillipson, *Hellenorientalia: The Near Eastern Presence in the Bronze Age Aegean, ca. 3000–1100 B.C.* (Göteborg: Åströms, 1990); Eric Cline, *Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea: International Trade in the Late Bronze Age Aegean* (Oxford: Hadrian Books Ltd., 1994); W. Vivian Davies and Louise Schofield (eds.), *Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant: Interconnections in the Second Millennium BC* (London: British Museum Press, 1995); Eric Cline and Diane Harris-Cline, *The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium, Proceedings of the 50th Anniversary Symposium, University of Cincinnati, 18–20 April 1997*, Aegaeum 18 (Liège: Université de Liège, 1998); Alexandra Karetsou and Maria Andreadaki-Vlazaki, *Kriti-Aigyptos: Politismikoi Demoi trion Chilieton* (Irakleio: Hypourgeio Politismou, 2000).
- ¹⁵ Kemp and Merrillees 1980; Ora Negbi, “The ‘Libyan Landscape’ from Thera: A Review of Aegean Enterprises Overseas in the Late Minoan IA Period.” *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 7 (1994): 73–111; Cheryl Ward, “Seafaring in the Bronze Age Aegean: Evidence and Speculation,” in Daniel Pullen (ed.), *Political Economies of the Aegean Bronze Age*, 149–160 (Oxford: Oxbow, 2010).
- ¹⁶ Kemp and Merrillees 1980, 226; Lambrou-Phillipson 1990, 57, 140; Cline 1994, 31–32; Robert Laffineur, “From West to East: The Aegean and Egypt in the Early Late Bronze Age,” in Eric Cline and Diane Harris-Cline (eds.), *The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium*, Aegaeum 18, 53–67 (Liège: Université de Liège, 1998).
- ¹⁷ Cline 1994, 32, 43, table 25; Peter Warren, “Minoan Crete and Pharaonic Egypt: Interconnections in the Second Millennium BC,” in W. Vivian Davies and Louise Schofield (eds.), *Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant in the Second Millennium BC*, 1–18 (London: British Museum Press for the Trustees of the British Museum, 1995). It should be noted that Egyptian objects constitute the majority of imported orientalia in the Aegean prior to the LM/LH III period.
- ¹⁸ Lambrou-Phillipson 1990, 133–140; Cline 1994, 31, 35–37; Ward 2010, 153.
- ¹⁹ The bibliography on the Keftiu and whether or not they should be associated with the Aegean is vast, but this paper will use the word “Keftiu” to denote Aegeans. See Paul Rehak, “Aegean Natives in the Theban Tomb Paintings: The Keftiu Revisited,” in Eric Cline and Diane Harris-Cline (eds.), *The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium*, Aegaeum 18, 39–50 (Liège: Université de Liège, 1998) (especially p. 40, n. 12) for more references. See also Jean Vercoutter, *L’Égypte et le Monde Égéen Préhellénique: Étude Critique des Sources Égyptiennes, du début de la XVIII^e à la fin de la XIX^e Dynastie* (Cairo: L’Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1956); Wachsmann 1987; Diamantis Panagiotopoulos, “Keftiu in Context: Theban Tomb-Paintings as a Historical Source,” *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 20 (2001): 263–283; Yves Duhoux, *Des Minoens en Égypte? “Keftiou” et “les îles au milieu du Grand Vert”* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, Université Catholique de Louvain, 2003); Claude Vandersleyen, “Keftiu: A Cautionary Note.” *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 22 (2003): 209–212.
- ²⁰ Eric Cline and Steven Stannish, “Sailing the Great Green Sea? Amenhotep III’s ‘Aegean’ List from Kom el-Hetan, Once More,” *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 3 (2011): 6–16. The Aegean place names most recently discussed by Cline and Stannish (7–10) are Amnisos, Phaistos, Kydonia, Mycenae, *dkis* [?], Messenia (Pylos?),

- Nauplion, Kythera, *wiry* [? – no longer Ilios/Troy], Knossos, Amnissos, Lyktos, and Siteia, with the final two illegible. See also Wachsmann 1987, 95–99; Duhoux 2003, 243–252.
- ²¹ See Wachsmann 1987; Rehak 1998.
- ²² Rehak 1998, 45–46. It is worth noting that Arthur Evans suggested a synchronization of Thutmose III and the LM IB based on the Theban tomb paintings in 1928, although the tomb paintings probably contain more nuance and hybridity than Evans could have known at the time of his writing, as Wachsmann (1987) and Rehak (1998) illustrate in their discussions of the scenes. See Arthur Evans, *The Palace of Minos*, vol. 2 (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1928), 736–750.
- ²³ Rehak 1998, 40–45.
- ²⁴ Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier and Barbara Niemeier, “Aegean Frescoes in Syria-Palestine: Alalakh and Tel Kabri,” in Susan Sherratt (ed.), *The Wall Paintings of Thera: Proceedings of the First International Symposium 30 August–4 September 1997*, vol. 2, 763–802 (Athens: Pergamos S.A., 2000); Aharon Kempinski, *Tel Kabri. The 1986–1993 Excavations*, edited by Na’ama Scheftelowitz and Ronit Oren (Tel Aviv: Emery and Claire Yoss Publications in Archaeology, 2002); Eric Cline, Assaf Yasur-Landau, and Nurith Goshen, “New Fragments of Aegean-Style Painted Plaster from Tel Kabri, Israel,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 115 (2011): 245–261.
- ²⁵ C. Leonard Woolley, *Alalakh. An Account of the Excavations at Tell Atchana in the Hatay, 1937–1949* (Oxford: University Press for the Society of Antiquaries of London, 1955), 228–233; Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier, “Minoan Artists Travelling Overseas: The Alalakh Frescoes and the Painted Plaster Floors at Tel Kabri (Western Galilee),” in Robert Laffineur, and Lucien Basch (eds.), *Thalassa: L’Égée préhistorique et la mer*, Aegaeum 7, 189–201 (Liège: Université de Liège, 1991); Niemeier and Niemeier 2000.
- ²⁶ Robert du Mesnil du Buisson, *Le site archéologique de Misbrifê-Qatna* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1935), 79–97; Peter Pfälzner, “Between the Aegean and Syria: The Wall Paintings from the Royal Palace of Qatna,” in Dominik Bontaz, Rainer Czichon, and F. Janoscha Kreppner (eds.), *Funstellen Gesammelte Schriften zur Archäologie und Geschichte Alt Vorderasiens ad honorem Harmut Kühne*, 95–118 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008).
- ²⁷ See Barnes 2008, 34–66 for additional details.
- ²⁸ Shaw 1997, 485–486; see also Cline et al. 2011.
- ²⁹ Mary Helms, *Craft and the Kingly Ideal: Art, Trade, and Power* (Austin: University of Texas, 1993), 4–5, 138–140.
- ³⁰ Michael Wedde, “The Intellectual Stowaway: On the Movement of Ideas Within Exchange Systems – A Minoan Case Study.” In Robert Laffineur, and Philip Betancourt (eds.), *TEXNH*, vol. 1, Aegaeum 16, 67–76 (Liège: Université de Liège, 1997). As Wedde (1997, 72) states, “the idea is not tradable as such. A culture does not conduct shopping tours... for captivating ideas.”
- ³¹ Helms 1993, 163, 214; see also Mario Liverani, *International Relations in the Ancient Near East, 1600–1100 B.C.* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 142–143.
- ³² See, for example, Liverani 2001, 142–159; Trevor Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings of the Ancient Near East: The Royal Correspondence of the Late Bronze Age* (London: Routledge, 2003); Marian Feldman, *Diplomacy by Design: Luxury Arts and an “International Style” in the Ancient Near East, 1400–1200 BCE* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
- ³³ Bryce 2003, 95–98.
- ³⁴ It should be noted that this disparity in hierarchy was not made overt in formal discourse where royal peers called one another “brother”; only vassals acknowledged supplication by titling their superiors “father,” who in turn called the vassal kings “son.” Ideological “spin,” so to speak, by which a gift was interpreted to show dominance or hierarchy, should only be understood to apply to a gift (or the act of giving) within a single kingdom, that is, as a tool of propaganda for the sake of the recipient king’s subjects.
- ³⁵ Liverani 2001, 155–159.
- ³⁶ See also Barnes 2008, 93–108.
- ³⁷ On copybooks in Egypt, see Wachsmann 1987, 12–17. On the general argument, see also Bietak et al. 2007, 86; Barnes 2008, 64–66; Ann Brysbaert, *The Power of Technology in the Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean: The Case of Painted Plaster* (London: Equinox Publishing, Ltd., 2008), 48–51.
- ³⁸ The so-called “International Style” of art, which combined artistic styles of numerous Near Eastern origins into locally produced elite goods, is not applicable to this discussion, since the Aegean never seems to have served as a direct source of inspiration or intensive focus; any influence traceable to the Aegean appears to have been transmitted through Egyptian or Levantine interpretations. See Feldman 2006.
- ³⁹ Bryce 2003, 100.
- ⁴⁰ For a concise example of the extraction of data from these royal correspondences in relation to the Aegean, see Eric Cline, “My Brother, My Son’: Rulership and Trade between the LBA Aegean, Egypt and the Near East,” in Paul Rehak (ed.), *The Role of the Ruler in the Prehistoric Aegean*, Aegaeum 11, 143–150 (Liège: Université de Liège, 1995a).
- ⁴¹ See EA 49 and EA 35, respectively.
- ⁴² Carlo Zaccagnini, “Patterns of Mobility Among Ancient Near Eastern Craftsmen.” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 42 (1983), 250–251; see also Cline 1995a, 149–150; Gary Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, edited by Harry Hoffner, Jr. (Atlanta: Scholar’s Press, 1999), 138–143.
- ⁴³ ARM 13 16.
- ⁴⁴ ARM 13 44.
- ⁴⁵ ARM 13 40.
- ⁴⁶ ARM 2 2; ARM 2 101.
- ⁴⁷ ARM 18 30.
- ⁴⁸ ARM 18 17, 7–15.

- ⁴⁹ Samsi-Addu orders his vassal Iasmah-Addu to send his mason to another palace since Iasmah-Addu has completed his own palace, and Samsi-Addu sends the same vassal another craftsman to take the place of a previous loan in ARM 2 2 and ARM 1 99 respectively.
- ⁵⁰ Beckman 1999, 143.
- ⁵¹ KUB 3 67; see also Zaccagnini 1983, 252.
- ⁵² Zaccagnini 1983, 247–248, 258–259.
- ⁵³ However, “peer” should not suggest that the other king was a royal “brother”; see Barnes 2008, 108–112 for an elaboration of this conclusion. See also Duhoux 2003, 212–215.
- ⁵⁴ For example, see Niemeier 1991, 199; Shaw 1995, 112; Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier and Barbara Niemeier, “Minoan Frescoes in the Eastern Mediterranean,” in Eric Cline and Diane Harris-Cline (eds.), *The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium*, Aegaeum 18, 69–98 (Liège: Université de Liège, 1998), 88–93; Shaw 2009, 473–476. See also Bietak et al. 2007, 86 and Brysbaert 2008, 12–13 for concise summaries of previous interpretations.
- ⁵⁵ See, however, Cline 1995a, 150; Panagiotopoulos 2001; Bietak et al. 2007, 86. Wachsmann 1987, 121–122 proposes that two embassies from the Aegean are attested by the paintings in the tomb of Rekhmire; see also Duhoux 2003, 20–21. Brysbaert considers the nature of fresco painters in terms of their local organization and potential for movement abroad and finds support for the idea of elite-motivated exchange as a method of transmission; see Brysbaert 2008, 165–185, 194–195.
- ⁵⁶ On the idea of a royal marriage see Bietak 1992, 28; 2000a, 39; 2005, 89; Bietak et al. 2007, 86. On royal marriage in general, see also Alan Schulman, “Diplomatic Marriage in the Egyptian New Kingdom,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 38 (1979): 177–193. The association of the griffin at Tell el-Dab’a with the Throne Room frescoes at Knossos is plausible, but the use of the griffin as a feminine symbol in Minoan art, itself not a universally accepted idea, does not automatically support the idea that the griffin was used as a feminine symbol at Tell el-Dab’a. As already discussed, symbols can readily change meaning when adopted into another cultural context, and the gender-neutral (or even masculine) equation “griffin = palace” is just as plausible.
- ⁵⁷ The assertion by Bryce (2003, 111) that, in Egypt, “[foreign] princesses were often little better than high-class chattels” is perhaps cynical, but it is supported by the textual record.
- ⁵⁸ Ward 2010, 153–154. It is also worth noting that Aegean material recovered from Middle Kingdom contexts are typically associated with tombs of non-royal, mid-level administrators and artists (153).
- ⁵⁹ See also Eric Cline, “Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor: Minoans and Mycenaeans Abroad,” in Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier and Robert Laffineur (eds.), *Politeia: Society and State in the Aegean Bronze Age*, Aegaeum 12, 265–287 (Liège: Université de Liège, 1995b).
- ⁶⁰ Duhoux 2003, 41–144. This central region comprises an area between Tell el-Dab’a in the east and Sais and Tell el-Farain in the west, and south toward Athribis; see Duhoux 2003, 138–140, figs. 14, 15. Colonial models should not be applied to this hypothetical population in the absence of physical evidence.
- ⁶¹ Duhoux 2003, 224–228; see also Cline 1995b, 270–273, 281–283.
- ⁶² See Ward 2010, 155–157 for a recent overview and bibliography.
- ⁶³ On the textual references for Keftiu ships, see Wachsmann 1987, 119–121; Ward 2010, 152. On *Prw-nfr* and its potential (although contested) association with Tell el-Dab’a, see Bietak 1996a, 82; Cline 1998, 201.
- ⁶⁴ See Duhoux 2003, 254 for a summary.
- ⁶⁵ Duhoux 2003, 254. For a summary of the Mycenaean argument, see Duhoux 2003, 254–258.
- ⁶⁶ I am indebted to Susan Langdon for this observation.