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*Warren
Iconographical
transfer*

KPHΣ TEXNITHΣ L'ARTISAN CRÉTOIS

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A MODEL OF ICONOGRAPHICAL TRANSFER. THE CASE OF CRETE AND EGYPT*

Relationships between areas whose material culture and physical resources are both distinctive and different from each other's are demonstrated through recognition of imports and exports. A more profound level of interconnection is apparent where locally produced artefacts display non-local features, especially in iconography and implied symbolic values. Interpretation of such artefacts may be achieved through convincingly argued individual parallels and comparanda. Arthur Evans achieved this in scores of instances in *The Palace of Minos* (1921-36). Jean-Claude Poursat's *Les ivroires mycéniens* (1977) and Lyvia Morgan's *The Miniature Wall Paintings of Thera. A Study in Aegean Culture and Iconography* (1988) are fine, subject specific recent examples. Such interpretations are assisted if set within the context of the artistic principles, styles, technologies and underlying beliefs specific to a given area and the people occupying it. For the linkage of Crete, Egypt and the Near East in terms of such iconographic fundamentals the seminal works of F. Matz, *Die frühkretischen Siegel* (1928), H. Schäfer, *Von Ägyptischer Kunst. Eine Grundzüge* (3rd ed. 1930), H.A. Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement. An Essay on Space and Time in the Representational Art of the Ancient Near East* (1951), W.S. Smith, *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East* (1965) and F. Schachermeyr, *Ägäis und Orient* (1967) are among numerous studies which may be cited.

As a small contribution to the process of recognition of such iconographical relationships and transformations of underlying beliefs a more formal model may be attempted. At the least it brings out questions which should be asked and it makes postulates more explicit in building cases for iconographical interconnections. An initial version, in relation to the Aegean and Egypt, was published in 1985¹ and a fuller version in a subsequent paper.² What is intended as a final form of the model is offered here, together with applications of it.

* It is a great pleasure to offer this small contribution in honour of a long-standing friend who has done so much to further our knowledge and understanding of Minoan Crete and the island's commercial and iconographical relations with Egypt, in addition to his distinguished and fundamental work on Mycenaean ivories and their iconography.

Abbreviations:

Crete - Egypt Catalogue = A. KARETSOU, M. ANDREADAKI-VLASAKI, N. PAPADAKIS (eds), *Κρήνη-Αίγυπτος, πολιτισμικοί δεσμοί τριών χιλιετιών. Κατάλογος (έκδοσης), Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο Ηρακλείου 21 Νοεμβρίου 1999 - 21 Σεπτεμβρίου 2000* (2000).

KARETSOU 2000 = A. KARETSOU (ed.), *Κρήνη-Αίγυπτος, πολιτισμικοί δεσμοί τριών χιλιετιών. Μελέτες*.

P.M. WARREN, "The Aegean and Egypt: Matters for Research", *Discussions in Egyptology* 2 (1985), 61-4.

P.M. WARREN, "Minoan Crete and Pharaonic Egypt", in W.V. DAVIES, L. SCHOFIELD (eds), *Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant* (1995), 2-3.

- (1) Existing concept or belief in the 'home' area
↓
- (2) Transfer of concept, belief or ideology by a local artist-craftsman into visual form, with consequent ideological or symbolic content and value
↓
- (3) Viewing, or indirect perception through description or pattern books, of an image or object by a non-local artist-craftsman or intermediary, traveller or trader communicating with the artist-craftsman
↓
- (4) Relating by the non-local artist-craftsman, now in own home area, of his/her understanding of the foreign image to the beliefs or ideology of his/her own world
↓
- (5) Expression by the non-local artist-craftsman, now in home area, of his/her understanding and the now modified foreign belief in the visual terms and structural principles of his/her home iconography
↓
- (6) Contemporary (modern) understanding or perception of what the ancient artist-craftsmen were trying to convey, with an awareness that contemporary structuring of reality is likely to be different from that of the ancient, just as that of one ancient area is likely to have been different from that of another

This may be expressed more briefly as

- (1) Concept or belief
↓
- (2) Concept or belief expressed in artefact or icon by local artist-craftsman
↓
- (3) Artefact or iconography seen by non-local artist-craftsman
↓
- (4) Artefact or iconography related by non-local artist-craftsman to own conceptual framework
↓
- (5) New artefact or iconography created by non-local artist-craftsman in own home area embodying original and own conceptual frameworks
↓
- (6) Modern perception (etic) of ancient makers' and users' intentions (emic)

The content of each stage in the above scheme is intended to be self-explanatory; what may be emphasized is that the whole forms a continuous process, with each stage after the initial one logically deriving from the preceding one. Stages (3) and (4) are by their nature not open to material verification; they are, however, fundamentally necessary postulates in order to proceed from stage (2), the original artefact or iconography, to stage (5), the new artefact or iconography in the area outside the original area. The scheme, being a modern construct, is of course etc. It is hoped, however, that stages (1) to (5) may carry conviction if also understood as an emic process, that is one which an ancient artist-craftsman or user of an iconographical or symbolic artefact would recognize. But the required testability of any theory or model is the extent to which it convincingly accounts for actuality, represented by existing artefacts.

The scope of the present contribution is to consider the applicability of the proposed model to three classes of Minoan artefact with linkage to Egypt. These and others have been discussed in the studies cited above and those referenced below, and in recent essays in the volume edited by Alexandra Karetsou accompanying the splendid 1999-2000 Exhibition in

Herakleion Museum, *Κρήνη-Αίγιπτος, πολιτισμικοί δεσμοί τριών χιλιετιών* (2000), particularly those of Carinci,³ Mikrakes⁴ and Weingarten.⁵

1) The Malia sphinx plaque (Herakleion Museum Π 19818) (Pl. XLIVa)

It was found in Quartier Mu, Building D, Room IV,⁶ part of the MM II (c. 1700 B.C.) destruction debris. Often illustrated and discussed it had received a brilliant primary publication by the excavator, Jean-Claude Poursat.⁷ His conclusion, based on detailed analysis of the iconography, was that we have in this locally made terracotta plaque a specific Minoan conception and rendition of the sphinx, perhaps a royal portrait related to the famous 'Priest-King' seal impression of the Knossos Hieroglyphic Deposit, while at the same time the object expresses "exactement la conception égyptienne du sphinx, corps de lion et visage du pharaon".⁸ He rightly concludes "Il y aurait à étudier les raisons et les conditions qui ont fait emprunter à l'Égypte, dans la Crète du MM II, cette représentation du pouvoir royal".⁹

It may be seen how appropriately Poursat's analysis corresponds to the model of transfer proposed here.

- (1) Egyptian conception of royal power.
- (2) Egyptian transfer of conception into visual form – sculptural and other renderings of the sphinx. Besides the Great Sphinx of Chephren (IVth Dynasty) we may cite as much nearer in time to the Malia plaque the magnificent rendering of Sesostri III (1872-1853 B.C.).¹⁰
- (3) Viewing of Egyptian sphinxes such as that of Sesostri III by a Minoan artist-craftsman, traveller or trader.
- (4) Understanding of the Egyptian image by the Minoan viewer and relating of this understanding to the Minoan conception of ruling authority.
- (5) Expression of Minoan understanding in terms of both Minoan and now modified Egyptian conception in visual form – the sphinx plaque.
- (6) Modern perception, beginning with Poursat's analysis and conclusion, of the Malliote artist-craftsman's and recipient's (ruler of Malia or Knossos?) intentions.

2) The Arkhanes, Hagios Kharalambos (Gerontomouri) and Mochlos sistra

(Arkhanes sistrum Herakleion Museum Π 27695. Hagios Kharalambos sistra Hagios Nikolaos Museum).

A terracotta sistrum of the rounded, open-frame type (Pl. XLIVb) was found with a child burial in an MM IA context in Funerary Building 9 Room 3 in the Arkhanes' Phourni cemetery.¹¹ Even more remarkable has been the recent discovery of six more terracotta sistra (five complete, one fragmentary, all with solid handles) among the burial remains of MM II date deep within the Hagios Kharalambos burial cave at Gerontomouri, Lasithi, excavated

3 F. CARINCI, "Western Messara and Egypt During the Protopalatial Period", in KARETSOU 2000, 31-7.

4 M. MIKRAKIS, "Μουσική στην Κρήνη και την Αίγιπτο. Ένα ιδιαίτερο παλιό ανάμνημα πολιτισμού", in KARETSOU 2000, 162-9.

5 J. WEINGARTEN, "The Transformation of Egyptian Taweret into the Minoan Genius", in KARETSOU 2000, 114-9.

6 J.-Cl. POURSAT, "Reliefs d'applique moulés", in *Mu* II, 116-8.

7 J.-Cl. POURSAT, "Le sphinx minoen: un nouveau document", in *Antichità Cretesi. Studi in onore di Doro Levi* I (1978), 111-4.

8 *Ibid.*, 114.

9 *Ibid.*

10 W.C. HAYES, *The Scepter of Egypt. A Background for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Part I. From the Earliest Times to the End of the Middle Kingdom* (1953), 198-9 and fig. 119.

11 Y. and E. SAKELLARAKIS, *Arkhanes. Minoan Crete in a New Light* (1997), 351-6 and figs 321-4; P. SAPOUNA, "Σίστρος", in *Crete – Egypt Catalogue*, 267, no 265.

by Philip Betancourt and Costis Davaras.¹² To these discoveries can now be added the wholly unexpected, very recent (2004) finding of an imported Egyptian bronze sistrum, again of open-frame type with two horizontal wires to carry the circular disks, in House C.3 at Mochlos.¹³ The sistrum had been carefully placed in a pit below the LM IB floor, protected by a half-tingot.

The quite complex situation of early sistra in Egypt and Crete must first be briefly summarized. In Egypt there were two main forms, that with closed, temple-shaped soundbox (naos type) and the rounded, open-frame type with horizontal bars fitted with disks which were shaken. The first type was used from at least the Vth Dynasty.¹⁴ The rounded, open-frame type was common from the New Kingdom onwards, but, significantly for the present argument, began in the Middle Kingdom.¹⁵ In Crete there were also two main forms, the rounded, open-frame type (Arkhaneis [see above], Hagios Kharalambos, Mochlos and the famous depiction on the stone 'Harvesters Vase' from Hagia Triadha¹⁶), and the calyx-shaped, open-frame type depicted on Middle Minoan Hieroglyphic seals.¹⁷ The rounded, open-frame type is also found in the Hieroglyphic Script, but much more rarely.¹⁸ From the above it is clear that the Arkhaneis: Phourni Burial Building 9 sistrum, late prepalatial in Cretan terms (MM IA), is at least as early as the earliest evidence for this form from Egypt. Be that as it may this form in Crete surely derives from Egypt, given the embeddedness of the sistrum in Egyptian music and dance and in its role in the cult of Hathor and Isis.

Before we consider the applicability of the model here proposed the fact that the Middle Minoan Cretan sistra were grave goods also requires consideration. Objects buried with the dead are open to at least two interpretations, as objects made for use in daily life and subsequently placed with their dead owner as personal possessions, and objects made specifically for deposition at death and subsequent symbolic use in the afterlife. Accompanying a child burial the Arkhaneis sistrum may be thought more likely to have been a lifetime possession than an instrument specifically needed for symbolic cult use by a child in the afterlife. The Hagia Triadha sistrum certainly demonstrates use in the world of the living, admittedly by an adult, in an agricultural ritual (whether sowing or harvesting or a ritual covering both). The Mochlos Egyptian import now provides an *in corpore* example, which the excavators think had been recently in use. But the multiplicity of examples at Hagios Kharalambos appears also to support, at least for Middle Minoan times, the second interpretation, objects for symbolic use in the afterlife, since it is less easy to imagine so many people having such a distinctive personal possession. But all these are just speculations.

- (1) Egyptian conception of Hathor ritual effected in part through the use of certain types of sound.
- (2) Egyptian expression of this conception in material form – the sistrum and its operation.
- (3) Viewing and awareness of the Egyptian instrument by a Minoan artist-craftsman or other visitor to Middle Kingdom Egypt or in Crete itself (Mochlos).

12 Ph. BETANCOURT, "The 2002 Excavations at Hagios Kharalambos", *KENTRO. The Newsletter of the INSTAP Study Center for East Crete* 5 (2002), 1. I am grateful to Professor Betancourt for updated information.

13 J.S. SOLES, "The 2004 Greek-American Excavations at Mochlos", *KENTRO. The Newsletter of the INSTAP Study Center for East Crete* 7 (2004), 4 and fig. 5.

14 HAYES (*supra* n. 10), 125 and fig. 76, an alabaster model.

15 *Ibid.*, 248, a fragmentary example in blue faience from a Middle Kingdom tomb near the pyramid of Amenemhat I at el-Lisht, and the depiction of a musician coaching ten sistrum players on the wall of the XIIIth Dynasty Tomb of Kheswer at Kom el-Hisn, for which see B. PORTER, R.L.B. MOSS, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphs, Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings, 4. Lower and Middle Egypt (Delta and Cairo, Asyut) (excluding Thebes)* (1934), 51-2; H. HICKMANN, *Ägypten. Musikgeschichte in Bildern*, II 1 (1961), 50 and fig. 26; D.P. SILVERMAN, *The Chamber Tomb of Hsu The Elder* (1988).

16 SAKELLARAKIS (*supra* n. 11), 353 and figs 325-6.

17 N. PLATON, I. PINI and G. SALIES, *CMS II. Fraktion, Archäologisches Museum, 2. Die Siegel der Altpalastzeit* (1977), 486 no. 316; M. MIKRAKIS, in *Crete – Egypt Catalogue*, 268, no. 266; ID. (*supra* n. 4), 163 and 169, fig. 7.1. PINI, *CMS XI. Kleiner europäischer Sammlungen* (1988), 22-3 no. 12.

18 SAKELLARAKIS (*supra* n. 11), 352-3; MIKRAKIS, in *Crete – Egypt Catalogue*, 268.

- (4) Relating by the Minoan viewer of their understanding of the Egyptian instrument to the Minoan ritual world.

(5) Expression of that understanding in visual form – the Minoan sistrum.

To what extent is modification of belief from Egyptian to Minoan implied? One of Hathor's many aspects was as goddess of the afterlife,¹⁹ while Isis, who at some point appropriated the sistrum of Hathor, was protector of the deceased.²⁰ Provision of means (through deposition with the dead) for afterlife ritual performance is readily understandable. But Minoan burial depositions with sistra might be thought to require the not inconsiderable matter of Hathor- or Isis-beliefs in Crete, which are otherwise not demonstrated. However Minoan belief in protection and support for the dead in the afterlife are surely an obvious postulate, given the huge range and variety of Minoan grave goods; knowledge of Egyptian protective belief and of one material way of effecting it, the sistrum, are not at all difficult to imagine and do not require acceptance of the whole panoply of Hathor or Isis cults in the island. Likewise Mikrales²¹ observes that adoption of a musical instrument from another region does not at all necessarily mean concomitant adoption of the music and rhythms of that region. Lastly we can observe that for the context of Minoan belief Evans's suggestion,²² based on the Hagia Triadha rhyton scene, that we have here to do with popular ritual is supported by the prepalatial date of the Arkhaneis sistrum and by the non-palatial context of the Hagios Kharalambos and Mochlos sistra.

(6) While knowledge of the ancient Egyptian conception of the sistrum is well based in evidence of the cult of Hathor and Isis our (including the writer's) perception of Minoan understanding certainly requires additional support, particularly for the suggestion in the preceding paragraph of what prompted the Minoan modification of Egyptian belief.

3) Minoan Taweret

In her masterly study of 1991 Judith Weingarten,²³ following the case made by Evans,²⁴ demonstrated how the Egyptian hippopotamus goddess of popular religion, Taweret, was adopted and transformed by the Minoans into a local deity, the Minoan Genius (Pl. XLIVc). The process began in MM II, at approximately the same time as the adoption and transformation of the sphinx (II above). Weingarten has since developed her analysis with a further study.²⁵ What is particularly valuable in her work is the demonstration that the iconography of Taweret in Middle Kingdom Egypt was not static and that not only did the Minoan iconography change over time but there was too an expansion of the Genius's libationary activity, reflecting a widening of her protective and purificatory roles.

(1) Egyptian conception of Taweret, a popular divinity protective of the concerns of daily life, especially the health of women in childbirth and as mothers.

(2) Egyptian expression of these beliefs in visual form – hundreds of images of Taweret as such and in action (scenes on magical knives).

(3) Viewing and awareness of the Egyptian image by Middle Minoan artist-craftsmen or other visitors to Egypt (imports of the image in Crete are not yet known).

(4) Relating by the Minoan artist-craftsmen of their understanding of the Egyptian Taweret image to Minoan beliefs and consequent modification of the Egyptian beliefs,

19 R.H. WILKINSON, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt* (2003), 143.

20 *Ibid.*, 148.

21 MIKRAKIS (*supra* n. 4), 166.

22 PM 1, 84-5. See, in agreement, CARINCI (*supra* n. 3), 34, 37; L.V. WATROUS, "Egypt and Crete in the Early Middle Bronze Age: A Case of Trade and Cultural Diffusion", in E.H. CLINE, D. HARRIS-CLINE (eds.), *The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium. Proceedings of the 50th Anniversary Symposium, Cincinnati, 18-20 April 1997, Agaveum* 18 (1998), 26; J. WEINGARTEN, *The Transformation of Taweret into the Minoan Genius. A Study in Cultural Transmission in the Middle Bronze Age, SIMA LXXXVIII* (1991), 11, n. 46.

23 WEINGARTEN (*supra*).

24 PM IV, 431-67.

25 WEINGARTEN (*supra* n. 5); EAD., in *Crete – Egypt Catalogue*, 155-6, no. 131.

particularly to express Minoan belief in the efficacy of formal pouring of liquids from a distinct form of jug (a non-Egyptian element) in purificatory, libation or plant fertility rituals.

(5) Expression of Minoan beliefs in visual terms – the modified Taweret image as the Minoan Genius.

(6) While our knowledge of Egyptian Taweret beliefs is based on textual as well as iconographic evidence our understanding and reconstruction of Minoan beliefs in divine protection, purification and libation, expressed through pouring of liquids, are based on iconographic evidence only.

Three kinds of artefact have been selected for discussion of both the applicability and to some extent testability of the proposed processual model of iconographical transfer from Egypt to Crete, and the implied adaptations and transformations of belief behind the artefacts. These three kinds far from exhaust the list of suitable subjects in Crete, while yet others are seen at Akrotiri, Thera. Carinci, for example, has an excellent discussion of the crouching or squatting, full-bellied (perhaps pregnant), 'grotesque', Minoan appliqué and figurines from MM II Malia and Phaistos.²⁶ He argues that they probably represent indirectly an Egyptian tradition beginning in the Middle Kingdom and seen subsequently in the well known Egyptian alabaster *Gravidenflasche* of the New Kingdom. They are related to Taweret (*inter alia* protectress of pregnant women) and, it may be added, have some of the characteristics of Bes,²⁷ namely the wide, spreading face, breasts and protruding belly, with which he is sometimes shown. Bes also was a protector of pregnant women and women giving birth. So the Cretan MM pieces are contemporary with and in some popular relationship to the Minoan Genius and perhaps to Bes. The classes selected in this paper are of special interest as illustrations, from the Minoan point of view, of a certain intensity of connexion, iconographical, ideological and in religious belief within the relatively tight chronological confines of the protopalatial period.²⁸

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²⁶ CARINCI (*supra* n. 3), 33–4.

²⁷ For whom see WILKINSON (*supra* n. 19), 102–4.

²⁸ WATROUS (*supra* n. 22), 22–7.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Pl. XLIVa
Pl. XLIVb

Terracotta sphinx plaque. Ht 6.9 cm. Malia Quartier Mu. MM II, 1700 BC.
Terracotta sistrum. Ht approx. 10.0 cm. Arkhanes: Phourni Funerary Building 9. MM IA, 20th century BC.

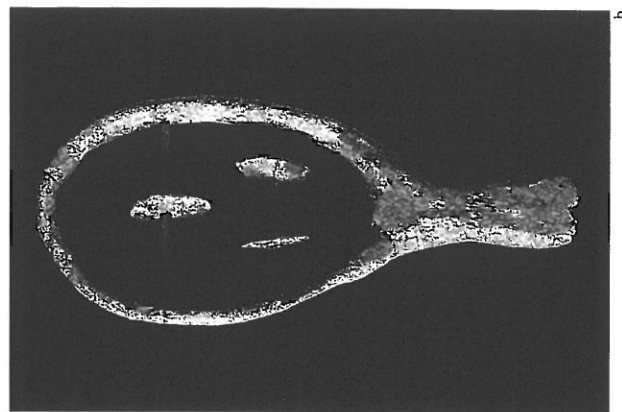
Pl. XLIVc

Terracotta sealing from gold ring (Herakleion Museum Σ-T 697) depicting Minoan Genius. Ht 1.7 cm. Phaistos Palace Room 25. MM II, 1700 BC. After CMS II.5, no. 322 (with the permission of CMS).





a



b



c

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