



Of Helmets and Heretics: A Possible Egyptian Representation of Mycenaean Warriors on a Papyrus from El-Amarna

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OF HELMETS AND HERETICS: A POSSIBLE EGYPTIAN REPRESENTATION OF MYCENAEAN WARRIORS ON A PAPYRUS FROM EL-AMARNA

(FRONTISPIECE; PLATES 21–2)

INTRODUCTION¹

IT is well established that the Minoans had links with Egypt,² and the recent finds of Minoan-style frescoes from the site of Tell el-Dab'a (ancient Avaris) on the Nile delta have led to renewed speculation on the nature and closeness of these contacts.³ Links between the Mycenaeans and Egypt, however, have proved more elusive. Evidence is provided by the quantities of Mycenaean pottery found on some thirty Egyptian sites, from the north-west coast (Marsa Matruh) to more southerly areas (Sesebi and Argo island), and by the Egyptian objects found on the Greek mainland.⁴ The mechanisms by which such objects reached their findspots, however, have been hotly debated, as have the conclusions that may be drawn from them.

Of Egyptian sites with Mycenaean pottery, the Eighteenth Dynasty city of el-Amarna has produced outstanding quantities. It was the residence city of the 'heretic' king Akhenaten (c.1352–1335 BC).⁵ Between 1,500 and 1,600 Mycenaean sherds have been found there, as have two whole vessels. The majority of the material dates to LH III A2, with some being

¹ The papyrus fragments were first presented by the authors at a colloquium at the British Museum entitled 'Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant' on 9 July 1992. They were subsequently illustrated and described by the authors in 'Akhenaten's army?', *Egyptian Archaeology*, 3 (1993), 34–5. Full publication of these and other papyrus fragments from Amarna is being prepared by RP for a forthcoming monograph. We are grateful to P. E. Nicholls for the photographs, and to the following for advice, comments and support: D. Arnold, W. V. Davies, M. Drower, H.-W. Fischer-Elfert, J. L. Fitton, V. Hankey, R. Johnson, B. Leach, C. Mee, E. Pusch, and T. G. Reid; and especially to the Dr M. Aylwin Cotton Foundation for a grant to cover the cost of the colour plate.

² These links are most recently reviewed in P. Warren, 'Minoan Crete and pharaonic Egypt', in W. V. Davies and L. Schofield (eds), *Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant* (London, 1994 in press). Recent studies on specific aspects of these links include: on pottery, B. Kemp and R. S. Merrillees, *Minoan Pottery in Second Millennium Egypt* (Mainz am Rhein, 1980); Minoans in Egyptian tomb-paintings, S. Wachsmann, *Aegeans in the Theban Tombs* (Leuven, 1987); on Egyptian objects found in Crete, J. S. Phillips, *The Impact and the Implications of the Egyptian and Egyptianizing Material Found in Bronze Age Crete ca. 3000–1100 BC* (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Toronto, 1991). Egyptian–Mycenaean connections were being researched by

the late M. Bell; see e.g. *The Tutankhamun Burnt Group from Gurob, Egypt: Bases for the Absolute Chronology of LH III A and B* (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Pennsylvania; not seen by us).

³ M. Bietak, 'Minoan wall-paintings unearthed at ancient Avaris', *Egyptian Archaeology*, 2 (1992), 26–8; V. Hankey, 'Review of the colloquium "Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant"', *ibid.* 3 (1993), 27–9 (with errata at 4 (1994), 40); M. Bietak, 'Connections between Egypt and the Minoan world: new results from Tell el-Daba/Avaris, Nile delta', in Davies and Schofield (n. 2).

⁴ For a recent review of this material see E. H. Cline, *Orientalia in the Late Bronze Age Aegean: A Catalogue and Analysis of Trade and Contact between the Aegean, and Egypt, Anatolia and the Near East* (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Pennsylvania; Ann Arbor, MI, University Microfilms). For a catalogue of Egyptian objects from excavations at Mycenae see *id.*, 'Egyptian and near eastern imports at LBA Mycenae', in Davies and Schofield (n. 2). See also V. Hankey, 'Pottery as evidence for trade, 1: From the mouth of the river Orontes to the Egyptian border; 2: Egypt', in C. W. and P. C. Zerner (eds), *Wace and Blegen: Pottery as Evidence for Trade in the Aegean Bronze Age 1939–1989* (Amsterdam, in press).

⁵ The chronology is that of S. Quirke and J. Spencer (eds), *The British Museum Book of Ancient Egypt* (London, 1992); all dates are approximate.

marginally earlier (LH III A1) and some apparently slightly later (early LH III B).⁶ Scientific analysis of samples of this pottery demonstrates that it came from the Peloponnese; some, more specifically, comes from the Mycenae–Berbati area.⁷

The large quantities of Mycenaean pottery at el-Amarna, and the relative paucity of Cypriot wares in comparison with other Egyptian sites, require an explanation that can accommodate these special features. Merrillees has linked the phenomenon of the Mycenaean sherds at el-Amarna with material from another Akhenaten foundation at Sesebi, and argues that while the king and his court may have had a taste for Mycenaean products, this did not necessarily involve direct contact between the Mycenaeans and Egyptians.⁸ Others have put the Mycenaean pottery from el-Amarna and Egyptian objects found in mainland Greece into very specific historical scenarios, involving direct links between the two cultures. Hankey examines the Amarna sherds in conjunction with four Egyptian faience plaques found at Mycenae which bear the cartouche and throne names of Akhenaten's predecessor, Amenhotep III (c.1390–1352 BC). She suggests that there was an official visit of Egyptians to Mycenae late in the reign of Amenhotep III, and that the embassy brought the plaques to Mycenae and then took Mycenaean pottery back to Egypt.⁹ Cline relates the Amarna sherds to two blue faience monkeys, from Mycenae and Tiryns respectively, which both bear the cartouche of Amenhotep II (c.1427–1400 BC); from these he suggests that there was an earlier official embassy to Mycenaean Greece.¹⁰

Corroboratory textual evidence for direct contacts has been sought. At the mortuary temple of king Amenhotep III on the west bank at Thebes (near modern Kom el-Hetan) there were once five statue-bases inscribed with schematic figures of enemy captives and toponyms in 'name rings'.¹¹ On one base was the so-called 'Aegean list', which included names such as Knossos, Mycenae, and Kythera. The list has been interpreted as recording places on the itinerary of an official Egyptian visit to the Aegean during the reign of Amenhotep III, but this theory has been totally discounted by others.¹² The reign of Akhenaten does not provide any conclusive textual evidence. The Mycenaeans appear not to be mentioned in the surviving 'Amarna letters', the diplomatic correspondence written in Akkadian that was stored in Akhenaten's city.¹³ However, in the tomb of the courtier Huya at el-Amarna there is a scene of foreign tribute, with a caption dated to the twelfth regnal year of Akhenaten, including 'the isles in the midst of the sea' (although the scene includes no recognizably Aegean figures).¹⁴

⁶ The numbers and nature of the Amarna sherds are usefully summarized in V. Hankey, 'The Aegean interest in El Amarna', *Journal of Mediterranean Anthropology and Archaeology*, 1 (1980), 38–43.

⁷ H. Mommsen, T. Beier, U. Diehl, and Ch. Podzuweit, 'Provenance determination of Mycenaean sherds found in Tell El Amarna by neutron activation analysis', *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 19 (1992), 295–302. NAA analyses carried out on Mycenaean pots from other sites in Egypt, such as Gurob, have produced similar results, as in A. Leonard, A. Middleton, M. Hughes, and L. Schofield, 'The making of Aegean stirrup-jars: technique, tradition and trade', *BSA* 88 (1993), 105–23, at 118–19.

⁸ R. S. Merrillees, 'Mycenaean pottery from the time of Akhenaten in Egypt', in *Acts of the International Symposium 'The Mycenaeans in the Eastern Mediterranean'* (Nicosia, 1973), 175–86.

⁹ Hankey (n. 6), 45–6.

¹⁰ E. H. Cline, 'Monkey business in the bronze age

Aegean', *BSA* 86 (1991), 29–42.

¹¹ The bases have been destroyed by the local villagers: B. Porter and R. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography*, ii² (Oxford, 1972), 450–1. The definitive publication of these lists is in E. Edel, *Ortsnamenlisten aus dem Totentempel Amenophis III* (Bonn, 1966).

¹² The 'Aegean list' (list EN) is also discussed in M. C. Astour, 'Aegean place-names in an Egyptian inscription', *AJA* 70 (1966), 313–14. Scholars denying that the list represents an actual visit to the Aegean in the reign of Amenhotep III include R. S. Merrillees, 'Aegean bronze age relations with Egypt', *AJA* 76 (1972), 290.

¹³ A recent translation is W. L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore and London, 1992).

¹⁴ N. de G. Davies, *The Rock Tombs of el Amarna*, iii (London, 1905), 9–12, pls 13–15; the same 'durbah' is also represented in the tomb of Meryre II: *ibid.* ii (London, 1905), 38–43, pls 38–40, 47.

The 'islands' may refer to mainland Greece or the Aegean islands,¹⁵ and if the reference is not simply rhetorical, it might imply some contact with the countries to the north of Egypt. With regard to textual evidence from the Aegean, the joining of two fragments of tablets from Pylos (Db 1105 with X 1146) gives us a man's name, *a-ku-pi-ti-jo*; this presupposes that 'Aigypotos' was already the Greek name for Egypt.¹⁶

Representational evidence is controversial. Mycenaeans seem not to have been included amongst the Egyptians' repertoire of depictions of foreigners, although Minoans can be clearly identified on Egyptian tomb-paintings.¹⁷ For example, in the fifteenth-century tomb of Rekhmire, a vizier under Thutmose III, there are paintings of men in Aegean clothing who carry identifiably Aegean objects; they are identified in captions as 'the chiefs of Keftiu' and 'the chiefs of the isles which are in the midst of the Great Green'.¹⁸ It is generally accepted that the Keftiu are the Minoans.¹⁹ The tomb of General Horemheb at Saqqara is from shortly after the Amarna period, and the Aegean pottery found there is Mycenaean; the tomb contains faint representations of Aegean peoples on the walls but these, according to Martin, show features characteristic of the Keftiu.²⁰ This suggests that some representations of Aegean figures may portray Mycenaeans rather than Minoans, the schematic nature of the representations continuing despite political change in the Aegean. Arguments to the contrary have mostly been advanced by Aegean scholars,²¹ who may underestimate the extent to which Egyptian iconography did not directly portray the actual state of foreign relationships. Another example of the differences between archaeology and iconography is the fact that while archaeological evidence suggests that the Egyptians had contacts with the Cypriots, these people do not seem to have been distinctively indicated in the Egyptian artistic repertoire. Despite these qualifications, the general consensus has been that if the Egyptians had been in direct contact with the Mycenaeans, they might well have shown them in representations, and (conversely) that a representation of Mycenaeans would be strong evidence for such contacts.²²

THE PAINTED PAPYRUS

A new piece of evidence can be added to the debate. The Department of Egyptian Antiquities of the British Museum recently acquired fragments of a painted papyrus (now EA 74100) from el-Amarna, the focus of so much of the debate.

The fragments were excavated by John Pendlebury, for the Egypt Exploration Society, in December 1936. They were found in a building designated House R 43.2, on the eastern edge of the official zone of the central city. This building seems to have been a 'chapel of the king's statue', as it contained the remains of a wooden shrine and various cultic items, and an

¹⁵ On the toponym see Wachsmann (n. 2), 93–9.

¹⁶ M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* (Cambridge, 1956), 136.

¹⁷ Wachsmann (n. 2), 27–40.

¹⁸ Ibid. 35–7; on the toponym 'islands . . .' see ibid. 93–9.

¹⁹ This has been disputed by J. S. Strange, who identifies Keftiu with Cyprus: 'Caphtor/Keftiu: a new investigation', *Acta Theologica Danica*, 14 (Leiden, 1980). His proposals are

refuted by Wachsmann (n. 2), 93–102.

²⁰ G. T. Martin, *The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb Commander-in-chief of Tut'ankhamun* (London, 1989), 27; for the sherds, see p. x.

²¹ Merrillees 1972 (n. 12), 289. But cf. id. 1973 (n. 8), 180; Wachsmann (n. 2), 108.

²² Wachsmann (n. 2), 109–10.

inscription mentioned the 'great statue which the king caused to be made.'²³ It seems likely that it was a chapel dedicated to the cult of a king, either Amenhotep III, whose name was found on some items,²⁴ or Akhenaten himself. Pendlebury wrote from el-Amarna in December, shortly before the end of the season, 'Finds in this building included a complete Mycenaean vase (the second complete example to be found on the site) and a number of fragments of papyrus—still awaiting proper treatment'.²⁵ Forty or so fragments remained of the papyrus. Other fragments (now EA 74101–2) included a few of painted leather and a few of papyrus with illegible signs from a text. Hardly any papyri are known from el-Amarna, although there are a few other fragments from another part of the city in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.²⁶

The fragments were sent back to England as part of the official distribution of finds from the site, but were mentioned only briefly in the posthumous publication of 1951.²⁷ By 1954 they had been given to Walter Fairman for study,²⁸ but they remained unpublished. Fairman partially reconstructed some warriors and 'part of a ship',²⁹ and considered that the papyrus portrayed a sea battle. In June 1992 two sheets of the fragments were acquired by the British Museum from the auctioneers Christie's. Some smaller fragments of the papyrus that Fairman had not mounted in glass remained in Liverpool; these have subsequently been distributed to the British Museum by the Egypt Exploration Society. They have been conserved and mounted by Bridget Leach of the British Museum's Conservation Department; during this process it was possible to reassemble the fragments into three scenes.

As far as can be told, the fragments come from a purely pictorial papyrus, which is extremely rare. Most other examples of pictorial papyri are religious, erotic, or satiric in character, and EA 74100 is the only known depiction of a battle on papyrus. Battle scenes are known from the earliest periods of Egyptian art, and occur in private tombs from the late Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom.³⁰ Battle reliefs in royal cult places are known from the Eleventh and the early Eighteenth Dynasty, but are much commoner after the Amarna period; such scenes are also attested on objects such as royal chariots and chests.³¹ The extant New Kingdom battle scenes are always composed around the figure of the king. Given the context of these parallels and the findspot of the papyrus in the 'chapel of the king's statue', it is tempting to associate the new battle scene with the cult of the king.

Although fragmentary, the scenes are of exceptional artistic quality, comparable in composition and execution to the battle scenes on the famous painted casket from the tomb of Tutankhamen.³² The parallels in style and detail between the papyrus and the casket might

²³ J. D. Pendlebury, *The City of Akhenaten*, iii: *The Central City and the Officials' Quarters* (London, 1951), 140–1; see also B. J. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* (London and New York, 1989), 283–5; B. J. Kemp and S. Garfy, *A Survey of the Ancient City of el-Amarna* (London, 1993), 63, map sheet 5.

²⁴ Namely, a faience ring (36/79) and a pen-case with the cartouche 'Amenhotep' (36/163). Pendlebury (n. 23), 141, pl. 79. 9.

²⁵ Letter of W. Fairman dated 5 Jan. 1954, now in the offices of the Egypt Exploration Society.

²⁶ Ashmolean Museum 9134.266 (mentioned in *JEA* 24 (1938), 161). They are currently being conserved in the BM before publication with Amarna fragments. They have traces of painted vignettes and hieroglyphs.

²⁷ Pendlebury (n. 23), iii. 141.

²⁸ This is clear from a letter of Fairman, cited above (n. 25).

²⁹ Christie's sale catalogue, *Fine Antiquities: London, Wed. 8 July 1992*, 102 (lot 268: 'A group of painted papyrus fragments from the House of the King's Statue at Tell-el-Amarna').

³⁰ G. A. Gaballa, *Narrative in Egyptian Art* (Mainz am Rhein, 1976), 30–2, 38–40.

³¹ See Gaballa (n. 30), 33–40, 90–1, 99–129; a new example from the start of the Eighteenth Dynasty is published by S. Harvey, 'Monuments of Ahmose at Abydos', *Egyptian Archaeology*, 4 (1994), 3–5.

³² N. M. Davies and A. H. Gardiner, *Tutankhamun's Painted Box* (Oxford, 1962), esp. pls 1–2.



FIG. 1. The first scene of the painted papyrus, showing Libyan archers attacking an Egyptian (drawing by R. B. Parkinson).

suggest a date towards the end of the Amarna period, which accords well with the archaeological context in which the papyrus fragments were found. No more precise dating can be attempted; one should note that it may belong to the final years of the city, possibly after Akhenaten's death, although there is nothing to make this more likely than a dating to the heretic's reign. It may even have been brought to el-Amarna from elsewhere. Battle motifs are rare from the Amarna period. Examples are known from the Karnak talatat, which were considered to be from the reign of Akhenaten by Schulman, but these have recently been redated by Johnson to the reign of Tutankhamen.³³ The military ethos of el-Amarna, however, has long been recognized, despite the pacifist mythology that now surrounds the 'heretic' king,³⁴ and there is little reason to doubt the broad dating, around 1340 BC in LH III A2.

The battle scene on the papyrus as it now stands is preserved in two main areas, one measuring 11 × 6.5 cm and the other 10.3 × 10.47 cm. The relative positions of these areas are uncertain. The best-preserved of the scenes shows Libyan archers attacking an Egyptian (FIG. 1; pl. 21 a). The foreigners are identified as Libyans by their paler skin, long cloaks, exposed genitals, and tattooed loins.³⁵ The Libyans are mentioned as subservient foreigners under Amenhotep III and are shown as such, among the troops escorting the king, at el-Amarna.³⁶ The Egyptian whom they are attacking is prostrate, hemmed in by the foreigners

³³ See A. R. Schulman, 'Hittites, helmets and Amarna: Akhenaten's first Hittite war', in D. B. Redford, *The Akhenaten Temple Project*, ii: *Rwd-Mnw and Inscriptions* (Aegypti Texta Propositaeque, 1; Toronto, 1988), 53–79; R. Johnson, pers. comm.

³⁴ A. R. Schulman, 'Some remarks on the military background of the Amarna Period', *JARCE* 5 (1964), 51–69, with brief communication at pp. 124–6; see also n. 33 above.

³⁵ For Libyan features see D. O'Connor, 'The nature of Tjemhu (Libyan) society in the later New Kingdom,' in A. Leahy (ed.), *Libya and Egypt c.1300–750 BC* (London, 1990), 29–113.

³⁶ The stela from the funerary temple of Amenhotep III at Thebes: *Urk.* iv. 1656. 14; N. de G. Davies, *The Rock Tombs of el Amarna*, i: *The Tomb of Meryra* (London, 1903), pl. 15.



FIG. 2. The second scene of the painted papyrus, showing a group of running warriors (drawing by R. B. Parkinson).

and apparently about to have his throat cut. There appear to be no visual parallels for an Egyptian being done to death by an enemy, though a later literary parallel shows that such a fate was a recognized part of the soldier's life.³⁷ A contextually closer but less exact parallel may be the reliefs and the texts of Ramses II's *Battle of Qadesh* (c.1279–1213 BC). The text describes a near-disaster when the king is cut off by the enemy, but this is avoided by the king's desperate prayer to his divine father Amun-re.³⁸

³⁷ The Nineteenth Dynasty Miscellany of P. Lansing describes the hardships of a soldier's life thus: 'The enemy is come and surrounds him with arrows, and life is far from him . . . But he knows not himself. His body is weak and his knee is feeble on account of him' (i.e. the enemy; 10. 2–3).

Trans. after R. Caminos, *Late Egyptian Miscellanies* (London, 1954), 401. We are very grateful to H.-W. Fischer-Elfert for drawing our attention to this.

³⁸ Trans. in M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, ii (Berkeley, 1976), 57–72.

The second extant scene shows a group of running warriors, arranged in two overlapping registers (FRONTISPIECE and FIG. 2). There is a third scene showing similar figures on a slightly larger scale, but it is very fragmentary. They are probably parts of a single scene, and there must have been at least fifteen of these running warriors. One of the figures in the upper register is an archer, drawing his bow to shoot an arrow. From the alignment of the figures, it is possible that these troops were shown running towards the fallen Egyptian soldier.

All of these soldiers wear white kilts typical of Egyptian troops. Two types of kilt are shown, a pleated one and a shorter one with a leather over-kilt; both types are shown, for example, on the painted casket from the tomb of Tutankhamen.³⁹ From traces in the third scene it seems that some of them carry the usual baton of the Egyptian foot-soldier. However, other elements of their dress are less typical. Some of the fighters are bare-headed and bare-chested in the usual fashion, but others wear short-cropped tunics and helmets (PLATES 21 *b*, 22 *a*).

The helmets are outlined in red, like the troops' bodies and kilts, and are coloured yellow (the pigment is orpiment). They have vertical demarcations, and are similar to the Egyptian representations of *gurpisu* helmets worn by Asiatics.⁴⁰ The earliest Egyptian representation of the *gurpisu* helmets is from Tuthmosis III (c.1479–1425 BC), and the closest parallel to the helmets on the papyrus is from the chariot of Tuthmosis IV (c.1400–1390 BC), where they belong to figures with Asiatic features.⁴¹ In this example the vertical plates which make up the helmet are clearly indicated. The profiles of the helmets are similar to those on the papyrus, and the shapes of the bottom edge are closely compatible. The colour of the *gurpisu* helmets is usually white in Egyptian representations, although yellow is also known.⁴² Although these helmets are a Syrian accoutrement, they seem to have been worn by Egyptians according to Schulman,⁴³ and according to Kendall they may have been manufactured by Egyptian armourers.⁴⁴ The examples he cites, however, are probably leather head-guards, not helmets. Helmets are shown being brought as presentations by a Syrian in tomb of Amenmes (Theban tomb 42; time of Amenhotep II), but in the tomb of Menkheperreseneb (Theban tomb 86; time of Tuthmosis III) they are brought by hybrid figures, wearing Aegean kilts but with a Syrian-style beard in one case.⁴⁵ The helmets on the papyrus, however, are not necessarily Asiatic.

THE IDENTITY OF THE TROOPS

Fairman seems to have raised the alternative possibility that the soldiers wearing helmets could be Mycenaeans, wearing boar's tusk helmets.⁴⁶ The rest of this article will examine the possibility of this identification. The battle scene, like the Tutankhamen casket, is not a historical record of a specific conflict but a work of iconography. Any attempt at a historical

³⁹ See n. 32.

⁴⁰ T. Kendall, 'gurpisu ša aweli: the helmets of the warriors at Nuzi', in M. A. Morrison and D. L. Owen, *Studies in the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians: In Honour of Ernest R. Lachman* (Winona Lake, Indiana, 1981), i, 201–31.

⁴¹ H. Carter and P. E. Newberry, *The Tomb of Thoutmosis IV* (Westminster, 1904), 26–33, pls 10–11.

⁴² Kendall (n. 40), 217, 221.

⁴³ Schulman (n. 34), 54–5 n. 25.

⁴⁴ Kendall (n. 40), 219–21.

⁴⁵ See Wachsmann (n. 2), 76; Amenmes = Porter and Moss (n. 11), I, 1, 82; Menkheperreseneb = I.1, 177. The scenes are illustrated in N. and N. de G. Davies, *The Tombs of Menkheperreseneb, Amenmose, and Another* (London, 1933), pls 5, 7, 34–5; Kendall (n. 40), 215–16.

⁴⁶ A note to this effect was included in the entry in the Christie's catalogue (see n. 29), which was derived from Fairman's notes.

identification of the figures must acknowledge the fact that such representations are schematic, and that the 'portrayal' of foreigners includes composite figures.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, features uncharacteristic of Egyptian troops might belong to a set of conventions used to indicate foreigners, and this might be indirect evidence of contacts between the Aegean and Egypt.

The boar's tusk helmet is known from both surviving examples and numerous depictions in a variety of media, and was described in Homer's *Iliad* (x. 260 f.). It was made principally of leather reinforced with pieces of cut boar's tusk. From the innermost layer outwards, it was constructed of a felt cap which lined a conical one of leather, to the outside of which were stitched rows of carved boar's tusk, each row facing in an alternate direction. Large pieces of the cut tusk were used for the lower rows, and the tips of the tusks were used for the narrower upper rows. At the top of the helmet there was sometimes a simple knob, sometimes a plume or crest. Some helmets had ear-guards, which may have been made of leather, sometimes reinforced with further small pieces of boar's tusk⁴⁸ or metal.⁴⁹ Calculations suggest that a large number of tusks was required to make even the simplest helmets, involving large amounts of time and effort in the hunting of wild boar. These factors would make such a helmet a highly prized possession,⁵⁰ and remains of helmets have been found predominantly in high-status funerary contexts.

These remains of helmets span the Mycenaean period, from the earliest in an MH II house context at Eutresis⁵¹ and MH III and LH I tomb contexts in the Mycenae shaft graves,⁵² through to the latest, for instance in an early LH III C chamber tomb at Kallithea (Achaia).⁵³ A similar chronological range in the depictions of such helmets is also evinced from the Aegean. They are known on the mainland from the time of the Shaft Graves onwards (MM III/LH I), for instance as worn by warriors on the silver battle amphora and a gold ring, both from grave IV at Mycenae.⁵⁴ A Mycenaean Pictorial Style sherd from Tiryns of early LH III C date, decorated with two warriors one of whom carries a tower-shield and wears a boar's tusk helmet, is amongst the latest of the depictions of such a helmet.⁵⁵ From the

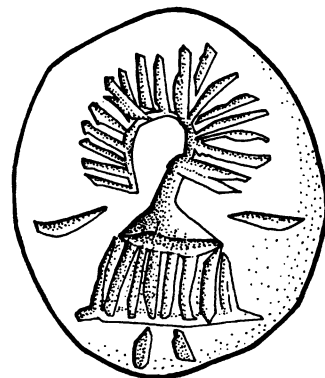


FIG. 3. A dark green steatite seal, showing a boar's tusk helmet (H. 1.3 cm; drawing by R. B. Parkinson).

⁴⁷ Wachsmann (n. 2), 4–26.

⁴⁸ e.g. on an ivory inlay head from a chamber tomb at Mycenae: G. Tsountas, *Arch. Eph.* (1888), pl. 8. 12; J. Borchhardt, *Homerische Helme* (Mainz am Rhein, 1972), 34, pl. 2. 1.

⁴⁹ e.g. on the boar's tusk helmet found with the Dendra panoply in Dendra chamber tomb XII: S. Hood, *AR* 1961, 9 f.; Borchhardt (n. 48), 32, pl. 6.

⁵⁰ For hunting and the symbolic aspect of a boar's tusk helmet, see C. Morris, 'In pursuit of the white-tusked boar: aspects of hunting in Mycenaean society', in R. Hägg and G.C. Nordquist (eds) *Celebrations of Death and Divinity in the Bronze Age Argolid* (Stockholm, 1990), 149–56.

⁵¹ H. Goldmann, *Excavations at Eutresis in Boeotia* (Harvard, 1931), 220, fig. 290.

⁵² Grave N, grave circle B: G. Mylonas, *Ancient Mycenae*

(Princeton, 1957), 149. Graves IV and V, grave circle A: G. Karo, *Die Schachgräber von Mykenai* (Munich, 1930), 112, nos. 521–31, pls 69–70; 151, no. 877, pl. 71.

⁵³ In Kammergrab B: N. Yalouris, 'Mykenische Bronzeschutzwaffen', *AM* 75 (1960), 44, Beil. 31. 4. A list of surviving remains of these helmets and pieces cut for helmets are usefully listed in Borchhardt (n. 48), 32–3 (mainland), 52 (Crete). Depictions of such helmets are likewise listed at 33–7 (mainland), 52 (Crete). See also A. P. Varvarigos, (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Athens, 1981).

⁵⁴ Karo (n. 52), 119, pls 128–31; A. Sakellariou, 'Une cratère d'argent avec scène de bataille provenant de la IVème tombe de Mycènes', *Congresso di micenologia*, i (1967), 262–5, pls 1–4. Gold ring: H. Schliemann, *Mycenae: A Narrative of Researches and Discoveries at Mycenae and Tiryns* (London, 1878), 259, no. 335.

intervening centuries, representations of the helmet are attested in a wide variety of media: they are painted on frescoes (from Mycenae, Tiryns, Pylos, Thebes, and Orchomenos) and vases, carved on gems, sealstones, and ivory, and represented in the greatest detail on ivory inlay heads.

Most of the helmets, both actual and depicted, have three or four rows of tusk. More complex examples may have five or six, as is the case with small ivory relief heads such as the fine example from a chamber tomb at Mycenae.⁵⁶ More sketchy depictions may represent the helmets with far fewer rows of tusk, for instance with two or even just one. On a dark green steatite seal of lentoid shape in the British Museum, it appears that the craftsman has represented a helmet with only one row of tusks (FIG. 3); this simplicity may be due to the small size of the seal.⁵⁷ Such circumstances may also explain the two rows on the helmet worn by the warrior on the ivory plaque from Delos; this may well have been carved by a Cypriot craftsman with an imperfect recollection of the actual appearance of such a helmet.⁵⁸ A similar range in complexity is attested in depictions of the helmets in frescoes, from a highly ornate example worn by a goddess holding a griffin at Mycenae⁵⁹ to very simple examples on a fragment from Pylos.⁶⁰ A miniature fresco from Thera demonstrates that a variety of such helmets could be depicted within a single composition.⁶¹

It remains to examine the possibility that the painted papyrus from el-Amarna shows helmets that may be compatible with these depictions of boar's tusk helmets. The vertical demarcations on the painted helmets resemble the lines on the boar's tusk helmet that represent the divisions between the various sections of tusk. At first sight there are no horizontal lines that might indicate the line between the two zones of the boar's tusk helmets; the relevant parts of the papyrus are unfortunately damaged. After consolidation, the fragments were examined with a microscope, and traces of paint have been identified on the upper section of the better-preserved of the two helmets. These are apparently the remains of a horizontal line (PLATE 21 *b*; FIG. 4). The position of the line, close to the top, makes it uncertain whether it would have indicated two zones or the edge of the topknot. As Aegean depictions include a helmet with only one zone (the British Museum seal), it is possible that the same feature could occur in Egyptian depictions. The helmets are painted on the papyrus on a very small scale, and this will have influenced the depiction of details (the height of the completely preserved helmet is 11 mm). Given the wide variety of representations in the Aegean repertoire, it might be inappropriate to expect an exactly canonical representation from Egypt.

The pale yellow colour of the helmets is another relevant feature. The colouring on the papyrus is schematic, like all Egyptian painting, although colour conventions varied between different works. In the papyrus, a green pigment is used for vegetation and also for what seem

⁵⁵ E. Vermeule and V. Karageorghis, *Mycenaean Pictorial Vase Painting* (Harvard 1982), pl. 10. 19. 1.

⁵⁶ See n. 47.

⁵⁷ Reg. no. BM GR 1882.10–14.8, cat. no. 213; no known provenance. Assigned to LH III C in V. E. G. Kenna, *Die englischen Museen*, ii (CMS vii; Berlin, 1967), 235, no. 195; Borchhardt (n. 48), 52, pl. 4. 7.

⁵⁸ From the votive deposit below the Delos Artemision. H. Gallet de Santerre and J. Trehheux, 'Rapport sur le dépôt égéen et géométrique de l'Artémision à Délos', *BCH*

71–2 (1947–8), 156, pl. 25; Borchhardt (n. 48), 74, pl. 3. 1; J.-C. Poursat, *Les Ivoires mycéniens: essai sur la formation d'un art mycénien* (Athens, 1977), 157, pl. 14; O. Krzyszkowska, 'The Enkomi warrior head reconsidered', *BSA* 86 (1991), 116.

⁵⁹ G. Mylonas, *PAE* 1971 [1973], 150, pl. 184 *b-c*.

⁶⁰ M. L. Lang, *The Palace of Nestor at Pylos*, ii: *The Frescoes* (Princeton, 1969), 32 H SW: 75 f, pl 24 *c*.

⁶¹ L. Morgan, *The Miniature Wall-paintings of Thera* (Cambridge, 1988), 109–15.



FIG. 4. The helmets on the painted papyrus (drawing by R. B. Parkinson).

to be trimmings on the Libyans' quivers and on their jewellery. This suggests that this copper-based pigment was used to indicate metal. The pale yellow may be intended to indicate that the helmets were made not of metal but of another substance; the only other traces of yellow on the papyrus are from the broken third scene, and it is unclear what is represented there. Elsewhere gold was frequently indicated with yellow paint, but this would be an unlikely material for a foot-soldier's helmet. Materials such as ivory tusks or horns were represented with white paint in paintings.⁶² However, white was not necessarily the only colour used to indicate ivory: sheets of papyrus display a similar range of colour to ivory, and this is indicated in colours ranging from white to bright yellow.⁶³ Other considerations will have been relevant to the choice of pigment: a white helmet might have been confused with the background here, since the helmets are placed against pleated white kilts that are worn by the upper register of warriors against whom the helmets are painted. Given the lack of exact parallels, the colouring cannot prove that the material of the helmets was represented as tusk-ivory, but it could be compatible with this interpretation.

Thus the depiction of the helmets may be compatible with representations of boar's tusk helmets. A small piece of corroboratory evidence comes from Edgar Pusch's excavations at Qantir, where a segment of carved boar's tusk from a helmet was found in a context dating to Ramses II. The object was examined by x-ray, and had clear fissures, indicating lamellae, and a hole bored in each of its four corners. It dates to LH III B, and accords well with the quantities of Mycenaean pottery in Egypt in this period.⁶⁴

While some of the warriors on the painted papyrus fight bare-chested, others wear tunics of mottled oxhide, brown and black. Two types of tunic are shown: one waist-length, the other short-cropped leaving the stomach bare. Such short tunics of oxhide do not appear elsewhere

⁶² e.g. the horn brought by a composite Aegean in the tomb of Menkheperreseneb: Davies and Davies (n. 45), frontispiece, p. 7.

⁶³ J. Cerny, *Paper and Books in Ancient Egypt* (London, 1952), 6–7.

⁶⁴ Edgar B. Pusch, 'Ausländisches Kulturgut in Qantir-Piramesse', in S. Schoske (ed.), *Akten des 4. internationalen Ägyptologenkongresses*, ii (Munich, 1985), 254.

in representations of Egyptian troops. Short tunics of white linen are attested, for instance on the troops shown on the casket of Tutankhamen, but these tunics are made of strips wrapped round the body, not of a single piece of stuff; there the king seems to wear a similar tunic of more elaborate material, patterned with spots.⁶⁵ Similarly, no such tunic is worn by Asiatics, who have distinctive costumes.

The association of the helmets and the oxhide pattern recalls a detail of one of the Thera frescoes,⁶⁶ although the oxhide pattern is on tower shields carried by the warriors rather than on tunics. While Mycenaean warriors on fresco fragments usually wear white, probably linen, tunics, they had armour of other materials. Finds such as the Dendra panoply⁶⁷ have put the existence of metal armour beyond doubt, although the prevalence of such armour in the Mycenaean world is still debated.⁶⁸ On two Mycenaean Pictorial Style vases, one in the British Museum⁶⁹ and one in the Pierides Collection in Larnaca (Cyprus),⁷⁰ there are depictions of short tunics. On the British Museum krater a figure stands between two pairs of horses (PLATE 22 *b*). He is naked from the waist down, but on his upper body he wears a waist-length dotted tunic. The Pierides krater has a man standing behind a chariot with one arm upraised, again naked from the waist down and again wearing a short-cropped dotted tunic (FIG. 5). These two garments do not show a full oxhide pattern, but are dotted, which may be a stylized version. A possible analogy is the dot pattern on chariot sides, probably a stylized depiction of the oxhide coverings of duel chariots.⁷¹ This stylization is seen on some early Pictorial Style kraters; both dotting and true oxhide patterning occur, for example on an amphoroid krater from Maroni

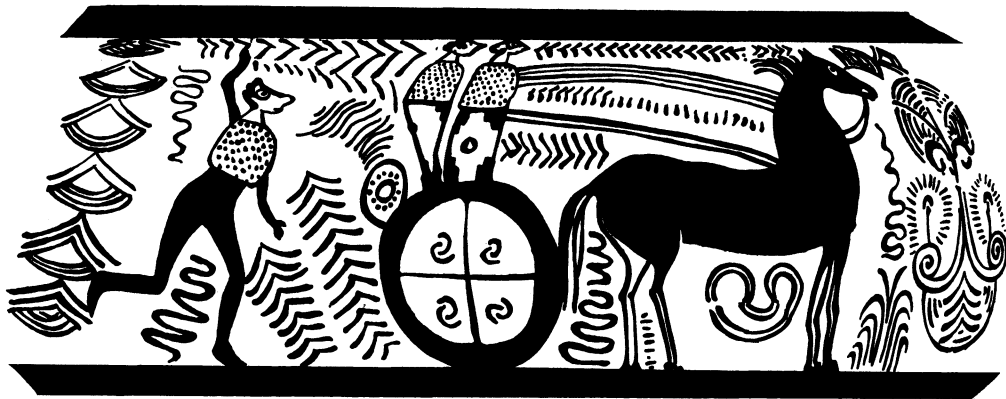


FIG. 5. A krater (Pierides collection), showing a man with a short-cropped dotted tunic (drawing by S. Bird).

⁶⁵ Davies and Gardiner (n. 32), pls 1–4.

⁶⁶ Morgan (n. 61), pl. 2.

⁶⁷ N. M. Verdelis, 'Neue Funde von Dendra', *AM* 82 (1967), 1 ff. P. Åström *et al.*, *The Cuirass Tomb and Other Finds from Dendra* (SIMA 4; 1977), 28 ff.

⁶⁸ A. Åkerström, *Berbat*, ii: *The Pictorial Pottery* (Stockholm, 1987), 131.

⁶⁹ From Klavdhia, Cyprus. H. B. Walters, *Catalogue of the Greek and Etruscan Vases in the British Museum*, i. 2: *Cypriote, Italian and Etruscan Pottery* (London, 1912), 67, no. c 342; *CVA British Museum*, i, pl. 10. 8; Vermeule and Karageorghis (n. 55), fig. 4. 18.

⁷⁰ Pierides Collection, cat. no. 33; unknown provenance. *CVA Cyprus* ii, pl. 1; Vermeule and Karageorghis (n. 55), fig. 4. 15.

⁷¹ J. Crouwel, *Chariots and Other Means of Land Transport in Bronze Age Greece* (Amsterdam, 1981), 133. Crouwel himself does not extend this line of argument to the dotted garments, which he sees as non-specific patterning. The dotting on such garments is interpreted by some as being representations of scale armour: H. Catling, 'A bronze plate from a scale-corslet found at Mycenae', *AA* 85 (1970), 441–9.

in the Metropolitan Museum, New York,⁷² and on a large fragment of a krater from Enkomi in the British Museum.⁷³ Some of the garments worn by those riding in the chariots are closer to a true oxhide pattern than simple dots, such as on a Pictorial Style fragment from Berbati.⁷⁴ It should be noted, however, that these Mycenaean representations of short-cropped oxhide tunics are not exact parallels for the tunics on the papyrus, for the contexts are different: the Mycenaean kraters do not show warriors fighting in a battle.

The tunics shown on the papyrus have another distinctive feature; a green copper-based paint has been used to mark strips around the tunic edges at the bottom, the neck and the arms (FRONTISPIECE). This may indicate that the tunics were metal-edged. It is possible to cite Aegean parallels. On the Linear B tablets, ideograms have been identified as apparently depicting metal corslets: TUNica* 162, from the Knossos Sc tablets, with a trapezoidal form and at the top either a yoke-like curved line or a pair of arches, and ARMa* 163 from the Sh tablets of Pylos, in one instance described as *to-ra-ka*, 'corslet'.⁷⁵ There is a sign group *qe-ro*, which is attested on three tablets from Knossos (V 789, G 5670, and S 8100), and a fourth tablet from Knossos (Kn 470)⁷⁶ has the same sign-group but this time followed by the sign for bronze, an ideogram, and a numeral. The ideogram, with its yoke-shaped top, resembles TUNica* 162, but is shorter and has a double outline. It is possible that the sign represents a short metal corslet⁷⁷ or a perhaps even a tunic with metal reinforcements.⁷⁸ Corroboration that the Mycenaeans had armour with metal reinforcements comes from another Knossos tablet, L 693; one line lists linen, a tunic (*ki-to*), and a weight of copper or bronze, while on the next we read *e-pi-ki-to-ni-ja*, 'tunic fittings', again with the sign for copper or bronze.⁷⁹

Archaeological evidence for leather armour reinforced with metal is problematic, since the leather parts of such garments are perishable. Mycenaean burials of warriors could have included leather armour without any trace surviving. Metal reinforcing strips are more likely to survive, but when separated from the tunic they would not necessarily be identified by an excavator. Nevertheless, some excavations of tombs have produced relevant material. At Kallithea (Achaia) two Mycenaean chamber tombs of early LH III C date were excavated.⁸⁰ In tomb B there were four skeletons, including one of a warrior with such accoutrements as sword, knife, spear, and boar's tusk helmet. In tomb A another warrior burial was equipped with a long sword, spear, and items of body armour which included bronze greaves and fragmentary bands of sheet metal. The excavator, N. Yalouris, identified these as metal reinforcements to a leather corselet. Similarly at Lakkithra (Kephallenia) an LH III C tomb contained bronze rivets and rim fragments, which may also be from leather armour.⁸¹

⁷² Metropolitan Museum 74.51964; J. L. Myres, *Handbook of the Cesnola Collection of Antiquities from Cyprus* (New York, 1914), 48, no. 436; Vermeule and Karageorghis (n. 55), pl. 3. 16.

⁷³ Walters (n. 69), 65, no. c 339; Vermeule and Karageorghis (n. 55), pl. 3. 21.

⁷⁴ Åkerström (n. 68), pl. 6. 3.

⁷⁵ A tablet from Tiryns, Si 5, again has *to-ra-ku* on each line with an ideogram, one resembling Tunica and one Arma: Crouwel (n. 71), 124–5, pls 163–9.

⁷⁶ Ventris and Chadwick (n. 16), 329–30, no. 230.

⁷⁷ Åkerström (n. 68), 131–2, identifies this with a short metal corslet for fighting on foot. F. Vandenabeele and J.-P. Olivier, *Les Idéogrammes archéologiques du Linéaire B* (Paris, 1979), 21–2, fig. 7, suggest a similar interpretation, namely that the

ideogram of the object called *qe-ro* must indicate two plaques of a short metal tunic.

⁷⁸ Ventris and Chadwick (n. 16), 380–1, no. 299 = V 789: '*qe-ro*: we have already met this word on 230 = K 740, where it describes an object whose outline is reminiscent of the corslet ideogram and has the adjunct BRONZE. It possibly represents some kind of foundation or framing to a metal-reinforced corslet'. However, in the second edition (1973), 495, they interpret *qe-ro* as arm protectors.

⁷⁹ J. Chadwick, *The Mycenaean World* (Cambridge, 1976), 160; Crouwel (n. 71), 125.

⁸⁰ Yalouris (n. 53), 47, Beil. 29.

⁸¹ S. Marinatos, *Arch. Eph.* (1932), 39, pl. 16 top; A. M. Snodgrass, *Early Greek Armour and Weapons* (Edinburgh, 1964), 72.

Both textual and archaeological evidence seem to suggest that the Mycenaeans had leather armour reinforced with metal. This accords with discussions about depictions of warriors dating towards the end of the Mycenaean period, such as on the Warrior Vase, the Warrior Stele, and some Pictorial Style sherds.⁸²

CONCLUSIONS

While the helmets shown on the painted papyrus from el-Amarna can to some extent be paralleled in Egyptian representations of Asiatics, both the helmets and the short oxhide metal-edged tunics have parallels in the bronze age Aegean but not in extant Egyptian representations. These accoutrements may have been standard pieces of Egyptian armour that are for some reason not represented in the numerous preserved battle scenes; however, they may also be seen as part of a repertoire of racial signifiers, like the white cloaks and tattooed loins of the Tjemehu.

The accoutrements are unlikely to have been indicators of Asiatic racial type, for the figures lack the skin tone, beards, and profiles that are usually accorded to Asiatics.⁸³ The painter of the Amarna papyrus had adopted such conventions in the case of the Libyans, who have a paler, yellower skin tone as well as completely ethnic costumes. The physical appearance of the helmeted warriors, however, is not differentiated from that of their Egyptian colleagues. No distinction in features characterized depictions of Aegeans in Egyptian tomb paintings.⁸⁴ If the accoutrements were intended to be Mycenaean in style, it is possible that the figures were meant to be Mycenaean warriors, or Egyptians wearing Mycenaean armour. If the figures were meant to be recognized as Mycenaean warriors wearing prestigious boar's tusk helmets, this might indicate that high-ranking Mycenaeans could be pictured as fighting as allies of the Egyptians against the Libyans. However, it is unlikely that the helmets were intended to be 'read' so literally; rather, they may have indicated that the figures were Mycenaeans, and not Mycenaeans of a particular rank. It is known that Egyptian troops included soldiers from other countries, possibly as mercenaries, so a literal explanation in historical terms might be that these figures were Mycenaean mercenaries in the Egyptian army. Foreign armour might have been imported for Egyptians to wear, but to include an unusual representation of imported accoutrements in such a composition would possibly constitute a misleading indicator; consequently this explanation is problematic. The only certain examples of foreign armour that are not worn by foreigners are simply items in lists of tribute or booty (which would not necessarily have been worn subsequently).⁸⁵ Helmets are shown as tribute from Asiatics in Theban tombs.⁸⁶ It is important to realize that the helmeted warriors wear Egyptian-style kilts, which suggests that the figures are composite representations rather than distinctive portrayals of foreign types.

⁸² See Åkerström (n. 68), 132–3.

⁸³ See e.g. the Asiatics on the painted casket of Tutankhamen: Davies and Gardiner (n. 32), pl. 1.

⁸⁴ Wachsmann (n. 2), 41–2. The presence of the helmets and the fragmentary nature of the papyrus prevent us from seeing whether the helmeted warriors also have the long locks of hair characteristic of depictions of Aegeans. However, judging from the surviving traces this is unlikely.

⁸⁵ Thutmose III, when recording the booty from Megiddo in his annals at Karnak, includes '1 fine bronze coat of mail belonging to that enemy; 1 fine bronze coat of mail belonging to the prince of Megiddo; 200 [leather] coats of mail belonging to his wretched army' (*Urk.* iv. 664. 3–5; trans. in Lichtheim (n. 38), 34).

⁸⁶ Kendall (n. 40), 215–17.

A literal historical conclusion cannot be drawn directly from a piece of iconography, but the painted papyrus indicates the possibility that the repertoire of the Egyptian artists of the Amarna period included conventions to depict Mycenaean attributes, at least. The existence of such conventions may imply some level of direct contact. This is not unlikely in view of the large quantities of Mycenaean pottery from el-Amarna, which suggest some degree of cultural contact; the chapel that contained the papyrus also produced one of the two complete Mycenaean vessels from el-Amarna, a stirrup-jar of LH III A2.⁸⁷ On this interpretation, the papyrus is a significant addition to the evidence that the Mycenaeans had contacts with the Egyptians of the late Eighteenth Dynasty.

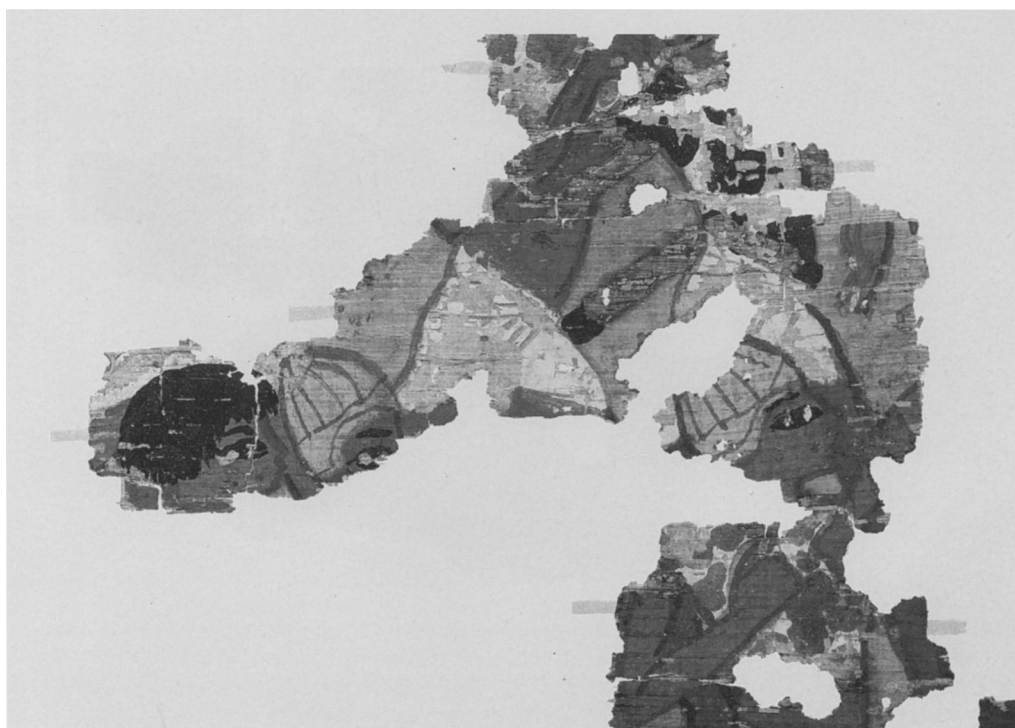
British Museum

L. SCHOFIELD
R. B. PARKINSON

⁸⁷ The stirrup jar is published by V. Hankey in Davies and Schofield (n. 2).



(a)



(b)

L. SCHOFIELD AND R. B. PARKINSON
MYCENAEAN WARRIORS ON A PAPYRUS FROM EL-AMARNA

(a) The first scene of the painted papyrus, showing Libyan archers attacking an Egyptian. (b) Detail of the painted papyrus, showing the helmets.



(a)



(b)

L. SCHOFIELD AND R. B. PARKINSON
MYCENAEAN WARRIORS ON A PAPYRUS FROM EL-AMARNA

(a) A detail of the second scene of the painted papyrus, showing a running warrior. (b) A krater (British Museum), showing a figure with a waist-length dotted tunic.