Entangled Itineraries
A Transformation of Taweret into the 'Minoan Genius'?

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Abstract: This paper deals with the appearance of the Minoan Genius in the Aegean Middle and Late Bronze Age. In its earliest depictions, a strong Egyptian influence is apparent, which raises questions about the distribution and transfer of motifs, things and ideas through space and time. Starting in Egypt, the appearance and function of Taweret will be illustrated first, followed by the development of the Minoan Genius, presented in some specific examples.
In the second part, some theoretical concepts will be discussed that deal with travelling and distribution of objects and ideas. Therefore, some stations of a possible encounter will be highlighted, illustrating some possibilities of transfer by people, who have to be understood as an active part within a Mediterranean *meshwork* of exchange. In merging theory and the archaeological record, some stepping stones of cultural *entanglement* can be worked out and will demonstrate how motifs can travel and merge within different cultural entities.

Introduction

The so-called Minoan Genius first made its appearance in the Mediterranean of the second Millennium BCE. In the archaeological literature, this Genius is described as a fantastic, demonic or even monstrous creature with significant features as a wolf-, lion- or dog-like head and an insectoid body in reference to its pinched-waist or even wasp-waist and carapace **(fig. 1)**. A beak-spouted-ewer is carried by this creature as an adjunct attribute.
The earliest version of this Genius occurs on Middle Bronze Age Crete, depicting a creature with a strong reference to the Egyptian goddess Taweret. This coincidence was first mentioned by Sir Arthur Evans and was elaborated later on by e.g. Judith Weingarten.[1] Based on the detailed iconographical analysis Weingarten argues for a direct motif-transfer between Egypt and Crete, while Fritz Blakolmer argued recently for an adaption via the Near East.[2]

Fig. 1 Minoan Genius, Agate Seal, Vaphio, CMS I 232 (Image courtesy of the CMS Heidelberg).

[1] Previously stated earlier by Winter 1890, 108–109. See also Evans 1935, 430; Weingarten 1991, 1–16; Blakolmer 2015, 197–220; Wengrow 2011, 131–149.

[2] Weingarten 1991, 9; Blakolmer 2015, 207; Chantal Sambin also considered a motive transfer within the Syrian-Palestine area, cf. Sambin 1989, 85.

Both of these contrary views are conceivable referring to mutual interdependencies within the Mediterranean of the second Millennium BCE, which existed in a transcultural exchange generating a heterogeneous network of continuous interactions, referred to as *koine*.[3] However, in reference to my M.A. thesis '*Nilpferdgottheit und „Genius". Zur Genese eines Motivs im Mediterranen Raum des 2. Jahrtausends v. Chr.*'[4], the adaption of the Genius is an opportunity to discuss the development and transportation of a motif and its change in meaning through space, time and context.

To follow the acquisition of different motifs, culminating in the Genius-figure, I would like to concentrate on the Egyptian influence at first, outline the Egyptian goddess, her iconography and function. In addition, some examples of the Taweret-motif within the Levant shall be mentioned arguing for a distribution in the Near East as a possible way of encounter. To sustain this thesis, the origin of the ewer, the 'new' attribute of the Genius, will be discussed in a brief digression of the main topic of this paper. Furthermore, its development in the Aegean is to be discussed in some examples to illustrate the changes of the motif and its supposed function. Finally, to analyse this 'journey' of the Genius, I would like to point out some theoretical concepts dealing with the appropriation of motifs and ideas, which can be understood as *entanglement*[5] and also suggest some possible 'stations' of encounter. Therefore, the movement of people and objects are closely entwined, and sailors, merchants and workshops have to be taken into consideration, as part of a complex distribution mechanism within the Mediterranean world.

Fig. 2 Taweret, wooden statue, 19. Dyn. (© Museum Turin).

Egypt: the goddess Taweret

The goddess Taweret **(fig. 2)**, which the Genius supposedly descended from is depicted as a composite with a head of a hippopotamus, arms and legs of a lion and a ridge on the back similar to that of a crocodile.[6] Her body is illustrated with a big belly and swollen breasts reminding of a pregnant woman. Her main function was supposed to be a protector, suggested by her attributes as the *sa-* and the *ankh*-sign meaning protection and life.[7]

The motif appears on amulets, button-seals (*Knopf-Siegel*), scarabs, magical knives and innumerable depictions and statues.[8]

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[3] Panagiotopoulos 2011, 31; Blakolmer 2015, 197.

[4] Submitted at the University of Heidelberg, Institute for Egyptology (14.04. 2014), unpublished.

[5] *Entanglement* should be understood in line with Ian Hodder (2012), for details see below.

[6] *Taweret* is the Egyptological spelling, deducing from the Egyptian name , *t3-wr.t,* meaning *The Great One*. Its better known Greek equivalent is *Thoeris* (*Θούηρις*), passed on by Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* § 19.

[7] Concerning the animal or the hippopotamus-goddesses cf. Behrmann 1989 and 1996, e.g. Thorëis, 79–84; Gundlach 1986, 494–498; also Sambin 1989, 79, with figs. 4–9.

[8] For an overview of the material see e.g. Wiese 1996; Tufnell 1984; Ward 1987. For a summary of detailed variation of the Taweret-motive on seals see also Stoof 2016, 203.

Fig. 3 Magical knife, ivory, British Museum 18175, depicting two Taweret-figures holding knives and a *sa*-sign (© Trustees of the British Museum).

The earliest reference is given by a faience amulet found in Gebelein dating back to the fifth Dynasty (2504/2454 – 2347/2297 BCE[9]), and depictions exist until Graeco-Roman times.[10]

In contrast to the iconographical record, the first evidence for her name derives from New Kingdom written sources. To fill this gap, the hippopotamus-goddesses Ipet (*ip.t*) and Reret (*rr.t*) of the Middle Kingdom ought to be taken into consideration. Ipet, already known in the *Pyramid-texts* of the Old Kingdom can be understood as a wet-nurse, who protects and supports the pharaoh.[11] Reret seems to have a more stellar connotation but was connected very closely with Taweret by depictions of her on the magical knives instead of Taweret.[12] This intermingling is revealed by a statue (Musée du Louvre, E. 25479) dating from the Twenty-second Dynasty (946/45–730 BCE), which presents a hippopotamus goddess with an inscription on the pillar referring herself as Ipet, Reret and Taweret, and so complicates a differentiation all the more.[13]

However, the function of Taweret becomes even more distinctive in the context of the so-called magical knives.[14] Made of hippopotamus tusk, these objects show groups of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic beings such as Taweret, Bes, Serpopard, snakes, lions, cats, baboons or the sun disk.[15] Associated inscriptions define them as gods (*nṯrw*) and protectors (*sꜣw*) giving shelter and protection of life and health during day and night.[16]

The inscription on the magical knife BM 18175 **(fig. 3)** illustrates this point: '*Speaking words: I have come, bringing protection to the Mistress of the house*

[9] For the absolute chronology of Egypt, the author refers to Beckerath 1997, 155.

[10] Brunton 1940, 524, but the motif is traceable during all Egyptian periods. For references see e.g. Leitz 2002c, 331.

[11] Sethe 1960, 269 (§ 381a–c. § 382).

[12] Polz et al. 1999, 398; Lieven 2007, 83 (§97a), 159–161; Altenmüller 1965a, 148.

[13] Jansen-Winkeln 2005, 125–146. For detailed references on these hippopotamus-goddesses cf. Leitz 2002a, 218; Leitz 2002b, 694, Sambin 1989, 81.

[14] This term was first used by von Bissing 1934, cf. 196, who was inspired by the shape of flint knives. Nevertheless, these ivory objects have no sharp edges, so the term knife is in a way misleading and these ivory objects were also named (magical) wands. For an overview and a categorisation of these objects cf. Quirke 2016, 1–10.

[15] Altenmüller 1965a, 31, for a detailed overview see also Quirke 2016, for Taweret cf. Quirke 2016, 327.

[16] Quirke 2016, 573.

Seneb'.[17] Moreover the inscription names the owner of the magical knives and the receiver of the protection, mostly women or children.[18]

Hartwig Altenmüller evaluated these objects in the context of Egyptian sun mythology, in which these figures protect the sun god Ra traversing the underworld during night time. Following his opinion, the owner of a knife can be seen equal to the sun god and so his protection becomes that of the owners.[19] Therefore, the goddess Taweret seems to be a protector of the sun god and this function was converted into a daily-life context, securing women and children.[20] Furthermore, these knives were also found in funerary contexts, as real objects or in wall-decorations, Altenmüller suggests that these objects were used in some ritual actions concerning the protection and revivification of the deceased.[21] A third function, closely connected to the former one but more common in the New Kingdom, is the use of the knives in the statue-ritual.[22]

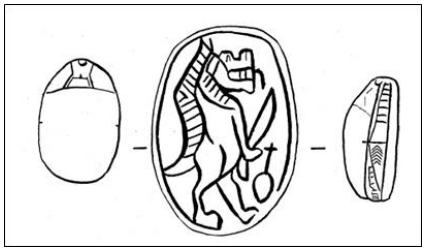

Fig. 4 Scarab depicting Taweret with a knife and a *nfr*-hieroglyph, Azor (Keel 1997, 753, Kat.No. 16)

[17] *ḏd-md.w ỉy(=j) stp sꜣ nb.t pr snb*; Altenmüller 1965a, 66; Altenmüller 1965b, Kat.No. 56.

[18] See also Sambin 1989, 81–81, fig 10; for more detailed references to other comparable magical knives cf. Altenmüller 1986.

[19] Altenmüller 1965a, 17, 176–77; about sun mythology e.g. Assmann, 2003, 64; Hornung, 1972, 56–194.

[20] Altenmüller 1986, 26; another association can be drawn by a birth-brick from Abydos connecting these figures, shown on the magical knives in direct vicinity to a mother and her child. Cf. Wegner 2009, 447–496.

[21] Altenmüller 1986, 27.

[22] Altenmüller 1986, ibd.

The Near East: a point of encounter?

The Taweret-motif is traceable on several objects found in the Near East, especially in the Levantine and Syria-Palestine area. A strong Egyptian influence can be recognised, but nevertheless, an Egyptian provenience or a local production has to be discussed in each archaeological context. Therefore, some examples shall be highlighted in the following part:

The goddess appears on the basis of a scarab dating to the Hyksos period (1648/45–1540/37 BCE[23]) found during excavations in Azor **(fig. 4)**.[24] The upright standing figure holds a knife and *nfr*-sign is depicted in front of her.

Fig. 5a Scarab SK1997.19 depicting Taweret with a crocodile on the back (O. Keel, personal property).

For two other scarabs[25], a local imitation of the goddess is assumed: the first scarab **(fig. 5a)** shows a depiction of the goddess on its base. She stands upright and holds an artefact. The lion-head is not elaborated in detail and merges with the carapace, which

[23] Beckerath 1997, 136–139.

[24] Dothan 1958, 272–274; Stoof 2016, 118; Keel 1989, 283.

[25] The pieces are part of the collection of the Bibel und Orient Museum in Freiburg. SK 1997.19 (fig. 5a) is made of light grey enstatite, measuring 24.4 x 17 x 8.8 mm, dating to MB IIB (1700–1500 BCE). The other scarab SK 2003.25 (fig. 5b) is also made of enstatite, measuring 15.8 x 11.6 x 7.2 mm, dating to MB IIB (1700–1500 BCE). For the generous provision of information and images, I sincerely thank Prof. Dr. O. Keel.

enlarges over the back up to the head. On the carapace, a crocodile is attached, similar to some Egyptian variations. An *ankh*-sign is depicted under the stretched arm. On the second scarab **(fig. 5b)** another Taweret-figure can be recognised. Again she is upstanding, looking to the right with a ridge on her back and some marks on her body symbolising fur. She holds an object which may be interpreted as the *qnbt*-sign.[26] Below this sign, representing a working tool for a mason, we are able to see two other signs, whereof the lowermost may be a *sa*-sign. An *ankh*-sign is depicted behind Tawerets' back. Due to the inaccurate design of these signs, a local imitation may be suggested.

Fig. 5b Scarab SK2003.25 depicting Taweret accomagnied by a *sa*- and *ankh*-sign (O. Keel, personal property).

In the Syrian-Palestinian area several magical knife fragments were discovered:
One was found in the northern cemetery in Tell El-Ajjul **(fig. 6a)** depicting the goddess, which carries a knife and an *ankh*-sign.[27]
Another fragment of a magical knife was found in Meggido, illustrating several mythical creatures and an Egyptian inscription. Unfortunately, Taweret herself is missing on this part, but it might be possible that she was part of the scenery.[28]
Near El-Jisr, two worked bone inlays were found in a rock tomb sketching a composite figure interpreted as a local imitation of Taweret **(fig. 6b)**.[29] Consequently, these examples illustrate a distribution of the motif into the Near East and its integration and perception in these contexts.

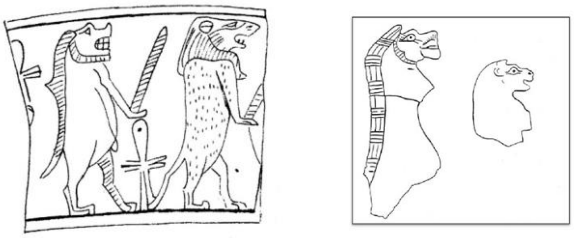

Fig. 6a Fragment of a magical knife, ivory, Tell el-Ajjul, Jerusalem, Rockefeller-Museum, Obj.No. 864 (Petrie 1933, Taf. 28, 8, Courtesy of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, UCL); **Fig. 6b Local imitation of Taweret, intarsia made of ivory, El-Jisr** (Keel 1993, 209, Abb. 1–2).

Excursus: the adjunct ewer

As already mentioned, the Genius occurs on Crete attributed with a beak-spouted-ewer. This ewer is held in a specific way, referred to as a libation-gesture: one hand on the handle while the other hand supports the base. According to Weingarten, this gesture originates from Egypt, indicating an Egyptian influence on Crete.[30]
In contrast, Machted J. Mellink brought the Anatolian cylindrical seals into consideration to demonstrate a possible distribution within the Near East: as a common motif on these seals, the banquette- or feasting-scene depicts drink- and food-offerings in front of a godlike figure. In addition, an attending servant is depicted in the figure of a cowering ape. Interestingly, this ape holds a spouted ewer, and as a variation of this motif, a branch sticks out of the ewer **(fig. 7)**, which may be regarded as an equivalent to the libation-scene on Crete.

[26] Information by O. Keel.
[27] Stoof 2016, 118. Other scarabs were found in Der el-Balah, Lacich, Atlit und Achsib, cf. Stoof ibd.
[28] Loud 1948, pl. 203.1.
[29] Keel 1993, 208; Ory 1945, 31–42, pls. xii-xiv; Additionally, Sambin mentioned some finds from Byblos, e.g. two cylindrical seals and a statue, cf. Sambin 1989, 85–87, figs 17–20.
[30] Weingarten 1991, 6–7; Gill 1964, 2.

Symbolising the contents of the ewer, Mellink interprets the branch as a representative for water suggesting also a libation ritual in this scene.[31] This way, the connection between an animal, a spouted ewer, and a libation gesture can be drawn, adding another area of influence to the discussion.

Fig. 7 Anatolian Cylinder seal, depicting an offering scene with an ape holding an ewer (the bottom right), (Drawing after Mellink 1987, Tab. 18, fig. 7).

The Aegean: the Minoan Genius

The earliest records of the Minoan Genius occur on Crete during Middle Minoan IIB–III (c. 2100–18750 BCE, hereafter referred to as MM)[32], which are only preserved in a few examples. In Late Minoan I (c. 1700–14700 BCE, hereafter referred to as LM) the depictions of the Genius increase, and were also transferred to the Greek Mainland. In the following, I will discuss several examples, highlighting the supposed function of the Genius and its development. Further two individual examples from Melos and Cyprus need to be mentioned, but a complete overview of the material is not pursued.[33]

Crete:

The earliest examples of the Genius are evident by four depictions: a seal was found in Knossos **(fig. 8a)**, two impressions from Phaistos **(fig. 8b–c)**, and another one from Kalyvia[34] **(fig. 8d)**. These depictions illustrate an upright figure with a head of a lion or a hippopotamus, the body with a big belly and swollen breasts, and a kind of carapace on the back.[35] Also, this figure is surrounded by a vegetal setting and equipped by the spouted ewer.[36] Within this iconography a strong Egyptian influence is visible, referring to Taweret as mentioned above. However, on account of the spouted ewer, the first merging of motifs is notable, culminating in the image of the so-called 'Proto Genius'.[37]

The function of this Proto Genius was first discussed by Evans: in association with the setting of a natural landscape and the ewer as a new attribute, he described the Genius as a '*waterer and promoter of vegetation*'.[38] Gill elaborates this interpretation by suggesting a fertility ritual shown in the Cretan depictions: the Proto Genius holds the ewer with a branch sticking out of it **(fig. 8c)**. This branch, following Gill, illustrates the successful end of such a ritual, while the depictions without a branch mark a moment before it.[39]

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31 Mellink 1987, 68–71.

32 Concerning the absolute chronology of the Aegean Bronze Age, the author follows Manning 2012, 22, table 2.2.

33 Cf. Corpus of Minoan and Mycenaean Seals; also online: http://arachne.uni-koeln.de (August 2017).

34 CMS II.3, 105, dating to LM IIIA.

35 Weingarten 1991, 6–9; Gill 1964, 2; further, F. Blakolmer named this type 'belly-variant', cf. Blakolmer 2015, 198.

36 Rehak 1995, 217; Gill, 1964, 7; Sambin 1989, 89.

37 Weingarten 1991, 3.

38 Evans 1935, 445; Panagiotopoulos 2000.

39 Gill 1964, 9.

Fig. 8a-d, Proto Genius on Crete, left to right: a. CMS II, 8-195 Knossos, b. CMS II 5-321 Phaistos, c. CMS II 5-322 Phaistos, d. CMS II, 3-105 Kalyvia (Images courtesy of the CMS Heidelberg).

According to the typological overview given by Blakolmer, the fully developed type of the Minoan Genius appeared in LM I (c. 1700–1470 BCE).[40] This development comes along with a more slender body and fading of the female markers, possibly referring to a more masculine or even neutral character of the Genius.[41] Furthermore, the motif appears in a wider range of scenes, indicating a deeper integration into the Minoan image-repertoire.[42] For instance, a seal depicts the Minoan Genius with a goat-griffin, flanking a male figure, which stands on consecration horns **(fig. 9a)**.

Given this context, the figure is identified as a god.[43] Some other examples display the Genius accompanying the Animal Master or Mistress, a motif known from the Near East as well **(fig. 9b)**, indicating another merging of several Near Eastern motifs in the Aegean.

Interestingly, the Genius can also occur as a receiver of worshipping as shown on a seal of carnelian **(fig. 9c)**. One extraordinary example is given by a stone triton found in Malia, depicting a Minoan Genius pouring a liquid into the hands of another of its own kind **(fig. 10)**, indicating that the Genius can act in rituals as a receiver and worshipper.[44]

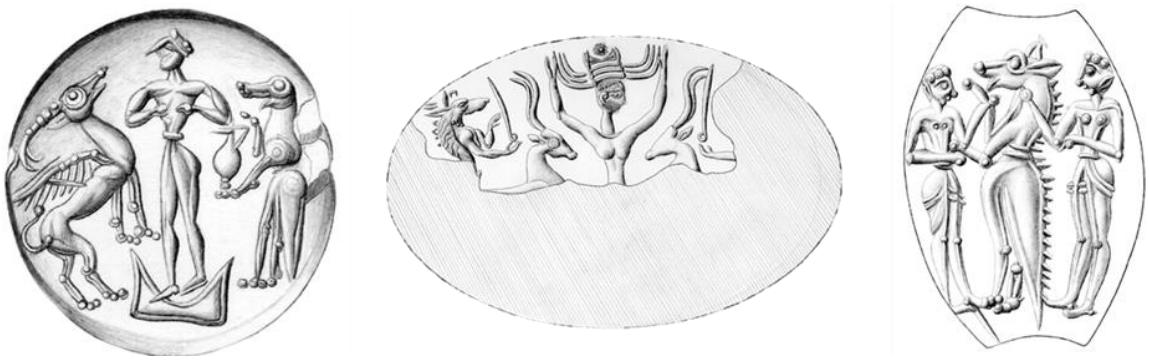

Fig. 9a-c: Minoan Genius in different functions, left to right: a. CMS V 201 Cahnia; b. CMS I 379, unknown; c. CMS VII 95, unknown (Images courtesy of the CMS Heidelberg).

[40] Also named the ‘standard variant‘, cf. Blakolmer 2015, 199.
[41] Blakolmer 2015, 200.
[42] Blakolmer 2015, 206.
[43] Gill 1964, 13–14; Rehak 1995, 227–228; cf. also CMS XI 036.
[44] Image see: Darque – Baurain 1983, fig. 14.

Fig. 10 Triton Shell, Serpentine, Malia (© EFA/ Irô Athanassiadi)

Greek Mainland:

Only the 'developed' Minoan Genius was transferred to the Mainland during the Late Bronze Age, which is traceable on numerous seals or their impressions. On account of the function of the Genius, some examples will be highlighted here. In addition to the formerly mentioned ritual sphere, the Genius is shown in front of an altar: on an agate seal found in Vaphio **(fig. 1)**, which displays a table-like construction with a horn of consecration on it.

Emphasising this ritual character, the Minoan Genius appears also in a row of several Genii or in-line with other mythical beings.[45] A striking example is the golden seal-ring found in Tiryns **(fig. 11)**: its oval surface illustrates a row of four Genii walking in a procession to the right. They face a sitting figure interpreted as a goddess.[46] S. Marinatos described this figure as a goddess receiving oil-offerings from the Genii in request for rain and growth of the grain on the fields.[47] Besides these scenes, the Minoan Genius is also depicted bearing or leading sacrificial animals as goats, bulls or lions, probably dedicated to gods.[48]

In Late Helladic IIIB (1330/15–1200/1190 BCE, later referred to as LH), the motif was no longer restricted to glyptic but appears also on inlays or frescoes etc. of high quality.[49]

Fig. 11 Sealing ring, Tiryns (Image courtesy of the CMS Heidelberg).

[45] Gill 1964, 13–14; Rehak 1995, 227–28.

[46] Van Straten 1969, 113, with regard to the bird behind this woman, Van Straten refers to ancient Greek mythology, where gods may appear in the form of birds.

[47] Marinatos 1966, 269.

[48] Van Straten 1969, 115–119. In addition to these pictorial representations, written sources were also taken into consideration to get some idea about the Genius' function: Some FR-Linear-B tablets originating from Pylos mention several deities, a certain amount of oils and a date associated with feasting and offering. One of these deities is named *di-pi-sij-oi*, which is translated by Van Straten as „*to the thirsty ones*". In comparison to the golden sealing ring from Tiryns, Marinatos argues for an identification of the Genii with this *Dipsioi*, by drawing a connection between oil offerings and the procession shown on the ring in a context of a fertility ritual. So this might provide a hint to connect the Genius with ritual action and oil-offerings to the gods, and so the Genius can be understood as servant or mediator to the gods. Cf. Van Straten 1969, 120–121; Marinatos 1966, 266.

[49] Blakolmer 2015, 204; Rehak 1995, 216.

Therefore, the Genius can be found on glass plates and on a steatite mould that originates from Mycenae.[50]

The glass plates depict an antithetic pair of Genii with the spouted ewer facing a column-altar. In contrast, the Minoan Genius on the mould is shown with a palm tree, which is a new feature apparently restricted to the mainland. This new combination of Genius and palm tree is also depicted on an ivory inlay, found in Thebes.[51]

The carving illustrates a row of three Genii carrying sacrificial animals, maybe goats, and palm trees dividing this procession.[52] Accordingly, Rehak postulates a changed function of the Minoan Genius, now shown on 'prestige' objects of valuable material or for the production of valuable items, in relation to a ruling elite, found in the context of Mycenaean palaces.[53]

This suggestion becomes much clearer on a fresco fragment, also found in Mycenae. On the fresco, a row of Genii is depicted holding a rope. But here the motif is quite more abstract: the heads remind of donkeys and what used to be a carapace now reminds of a colourful cape held together by a belt.[54] These examples illustrate the further development on the Mainland, transmitting the motif of the Minoan Genius into another cultural context, maybe provided with a different function or meaning within the Mycenaean palaces.[55] In addition, several other examples are known within the Aegean: The fragment of a crater depicting the lower part of an upright figure, dating to LH IIIC, which was found on Phylakopi on Melos. Assuming that this figure may be another Minoan Genius, it is possible to follow this motif to the Cyclades.[56] The motif is also traceable in Cyprus: Weingarten mentioned three pairs of Genii on the handles of an amphoroid krater, depicting the Genii with a wolf or dog-like face, carapace and a belt.[57]

To sum up, the examples shown indicate a development in iconography, in its context of use and as well as in function: bearing all this information in mind, the function of the Minoan Genius was suggested to be an attendant and receiver of ritual actions in a sacred area, 'acting as a mediator between immanent and transcended worlds'.[58] Despite these illustrated aspects of fertility or libation, the Genius 'never shows any connection with childbirth', indicating an adaption of the Egyptian motif but not its function.[59] This is even more significant on the Mainland, where a connection to the palatial elite is traceable. Furthermore, with an increasing sphere of influence, the Mycenaean motif was spread throughout the Mediterranean and reached Melos and Cyprus. This indicates that the distribution of the motif back into the eastern Mediterranean was due to the growing influence of the Mycenaeans, and in the specific example of Cyprus, craftsmen or the local elite may have played the most prominent role in this development.[60]

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50 Images see: Van Straten 1969, 114, cf. figs. 13–14.

51 Image see: Rehak 1995, 218, fig. 2.

52 Dating to LH IIIB1, Rehak 1995, 219; Blakolmer 2015, 201 and fig. 17.

53 Rehak 1995, 229.

54 Imgage see: Blakolmer 2015,203, fig. 18

55 Rehak 1995, 219 argues for a reconstruction of the frescos of the throne room in Knossos with a palm-motive, drawing a connection between palm-motive and a royal context.

56 Blakolmer 2015, 204, fig. 19.

57 Weingarten 2010, 99, figs. 3–5.

58 Van Straten 1969, 119; Gill 1964, 7–8; nevertheless, an impression found in Kato Zakros (CMS II 7, 31) shows a dynamic scene of a Genius attacking a bull, which questions a solely peaceful nature of the Genius.

59 Blakolmer 2015, 205.

60 Hadjisavvas 2010.

Travelling things: a theoretical approach

To substantiate the distribution of motifs, ideas or objects by iconographical comparison, some theoretical thoughts will be discussed in this part. The scholarly approach about how distribution mechanisms can be explained has a dynamic development and should be briefly discussed: In the past, concepts of *diffusionism* or *acculturation* were used to describe appropriation as a result of migration between static cultural complexes.[61] These concepts have been criticised for explaining change and exchange as a unilateral transfer between cultural groups. To go somewhat further, the term of *hybridization* was used to describe exchange- and movement-mechanisms, resulting in a merging of different aspects to create something new. Its primary meaning derives from the natural sciences, describing offspring as a result of cross-breeding; it was also used in a political way to convey a negative connotation as an opposite to 'purity', associated with degeneration and inferiority.[62] Therefore, in the context of modern-day transcultural studies, this term should be handled with caution and in a neutral manner, only as a description of certain adaptive processes.[63]

To avoid these negative connotations, another concept was suggested to describe the way things[64] were used. The *biography of objects* is used to summarise all object-related stations of production, distribution, use, re-use, consumption, and deposition.[65] Rather, objects should be understood as dynamic entities, accumulating meaning and changing their usage and function while passing through different contexts. Nevertheless, the term biography[66] also evokes some problems in the archaeological approach: there is hardly any possibility to reconstruct all of these biographical stations a thing possibly encountered, especially in prehistoric contexts. Most of the time, archaeological finds are decontextualized, or reflect just the aspect of deposition, disregarding previous human-thing interdependencies. Furthermore, there is a debate about the beginning and the end of such a biography, concerning questions about re-use, retrieval and restoring things in museums.[67] Finally, this concept turned out to be criticised as well for its object-focus: The biographical stations were considered as caused by humans, nevertheless yet neglecting the objects' inherent *agency*, and ability to convey or even create sociality.[68]

Regarding these aspects, a number of theoretical concepts ought to be taken into consideration, which focuses on complex

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61 Schreiber 2013, 55–56; Hahn 2013, 6.

62 Ackermann 2012, 6; Schreiber 2013, 60.

63 Cf. Stockhammer 2012a.

64 Following Ian Hodder the term *thing* is to be preferred in contrast to *object*: while the term *object* just refers to an external description, *thing* defines items in their functional context and so, exceeding over a descriptive moment, considering the *things* own *agency*. So, metaphorically speaking, a jar as an *object* may be made of clay or plastic with a spout or a handle. But the fact that the *thing* jar possesses a spout or a handle, intends a special usage. The way how the jar can be transported or stored, which liquids were filled in or spouted, injects the jar with *agency* influencing its handling by other actors. So the jug indicates a special use referring to the participants and the use-context, indicating a social-aspect: so Ian Hodder summarises: "it is this gathering that makes a jug a *thing*"; cf. Hodder 2012, 7–8; Heidegger 1975, 167.

65 In contrast to the *chaîne opératoire*, which referrers just to production process and functional changes, the *biography of objects* tries to summarise all aspects of an objects use-life, e.g. cf. Kopytoff 1986; Gosden – Marshall 1999; Hoskins 2006; Hahn 2015.

66 Tilley 2006, 1–6.

67 Samida 2010, 90; Hahn 2013, 2–4.

68 Bräunlein 2012, 14; Hahn 2013, 3.

human-thing-relations. Therefore, things were understood as independent entities, which are able to influence people due to their inherent *agency*.[69] According to Hahn, cultural artefacts are never inert, rather embedded in mutual contexts gathering different meanings in different contexts, which were highlighted in the examples above.[70]

Consequently, when it comes to the creation of the Minoan Genius, we are confronted with a complex movement of different motifs on various media, and with questions about the independence of these movements, or if things are reliant on the travelling of people.[71] Evocating an active destination-oriented kind of movement, the term *travelling* was criticised. Furthermore, Hahn emphasises, that things were distributed by people according to their social and economic status, causing an unequal access to things.[72]

So, the mobility of things in question, the movement of things and ideas are understood as following some kind of pathways in a *meshwork*[73] that entwines things and humans. By the term *wayfaring,* Tim Ingold refers to a kind of movement, which implies an inherent activity and possibility to interact in this *meshwork*, while transport means the carrying of goods for a special purpose and a specific destination.[74] Trying to avoid this criticism, Hahn prefers the term *itinerary* as a metaphor for things in order to emphasise 'the non-linear character of an object's mobility' connected with a possible change of function or meaning in different contexts.[75] Considering complex 'mobile forms of existence', an itinerary's *wayfaring* takes place without intention, combining phases of transfer and static, straight and irregular ways of movement.[76]

To improve the aspect of sociality, transcultural exchange in ancient cultural entities is described with the term of *alterity*. By creating an opposition to identity, *alterity* means difference or otherness. Using this term in the context of transcultural studies, it allows describing the entities' knowledge about and willingness to react to otherness.[77] To illustrate the exposure with *alterity* a theoretical model was brought into the discussion by Hahn and Stockhammer, named *entanglement*:

The concept of *entanglement* considers the *agency* of human and non-human actors and tries, in a neutral way, to deal with the aspects of cultural interdependencies.[78] *Entanglement* takes effect after a phase of encounter where two or more entities

[69] According to Hodder, *agency* is defined as 'the ever-present force of things: the life force of humans and all organic things, and the force of attraction, repulsion, etc. of all material things and their interactions'. Cf. Hodder 2012, 215. Another definition can be found by Laura Ahearns: 'agency is the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act' cf. Hoskins 2006, 74. Being aware of the critiques relating this agency-terminus to an active behaviour of things, Stockhammer suggests to use the term '*effectancy*' in order to describe the relationship between humans and things. Cf. Stockhammer 2016, 336; Schreiber 2013, 57.

[70] Hahn 2013, 1.

[71] Hahn 2013, 5. Hahn refers to the diffusion of cultivated plants, which were adopted worldwide and changing the way of life of people concerning nutrition etc. But often people are not aware of their origins or ways of transport.

[72] Hahn 2013, 7.

[73] Ingold uses the term *meshwork* to describe the interwoven and dynamic relationships between people and also with things. Ingold 2009, 35. 38.

[74] Ingold 2009, 35.

[75] Hahn 2013, 8.

[76] Hahn 2013, ibid.

[77] Panagiotopoulos 2011, 52–53.

[78] Hodder (2012), 88-111, Stockhammer uses the concept of entanglement in a different way to focus on the combination and merging of iconographic elements, more or less in the sense of hybridisation, Cf. Stockhammer 2012b, 89.

converge. In this moment the actors are confronted with *alterity* and are forced to deal with this, reaching from refusal to different stages of acceptance.[79] These stages can be classified into four categories, which are *appropriation*, *incorporation, objectification* and *transformation*.[80]

In a second step, these four stages were combined into two main categories by Stockhammer: *appropriation* and *incorporation* were grouped in the stage of *relational entanglement* emphasising the adaption of an object into a new local context but without changing its appearance or function. In this case the object is called *appropriated artefact*, but unfortunately it is hardly recognisable in the archaeological context.[81]

In contrast, *objectification* and *transformation* were grouped in the stage of *material entanglement*. Now the object is not only adapted to another context but also influenced by the owner's *agency*. That leads to a transformation providing the item with a new function and meaning, sometimes accompanied by physical modifications. Usually, these rearrangements include a mixing with local elements, so the *material entanglement* can be recognised even without a clear archaeological context; it is then termed *entangled artefact*.[82]

Conjunction

Tying the threads together, I would like to merge these theoretical thoughts with the archaeological examples discussed above in order to illustrate the complex *wayfaring* of things and motifs. In doing so, the transformation of Taweret into the Minoan Genius can be understood as different stages of *entanglement*:

<u>appropriation and objectification</u>

To argue for a direct motif transfer, the Taweret-motifs, found in the Near Eastern Area, as they indicate the distribution of the original motif to different cultural contexts as well as their local imitation, which can be understood as the stage of *objectification*. Hence, the Near East can be considered a place of encounter, where people dealt with *alterity* of foreign motifs and integrated them into their own cultural context. Furthermore, a scarab from the Tholos tomb in Platanos on Crete ought to be considered: The base **(fig. 12)** depicts the Egyptian goddess with an edged head and big belly, even with the previously mentioned crocodile ridge on the back. Besides the goddess, some spiral decoration and an ape are illustrated, too.[83] If we suggest an Egyptian origin of the scarab, the stage of *appropriation* is traceable here, dealing with an Egyptian item set into a Minoan cultural

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79 Ibid.

80 Stockhammer 2012b, 90; cf. Panagiotopoulos naming this stage *reversible*, cf. Panagiotopoulos 2012, 56–57.

81 Ibid.

82 Stockhammer 2012b, 90; Stockhammer 2013, 16–17; Panagiotopoulos names this stage *irreversible*, cf., Panagiotopoulos 2012, 57. To illustrate this process, the three lobed brooches (*Kleeblatt-Fibel*) shall be brought into mind, as a good example to demonstrate the *biography of objects*: deriving from Anglo-Saxon strap-holders, these items were brought to Scandinavia to begin a new 'second life' as women's jewellery; cf. Schreiber 2013, 86. 'Second life', according to Panagiotopoulos means the re-contextualization of objects, detached from their genuine context and provided with a new meaning, Panagiotopoulos 2012, 56. So the items became personal property and were brought to a new local context, speaking of *relational entanglement*. There the objects where integrated in daily use and finally transformed receiving a new function. Equipped with a loop the former strap holders could be worn as a pendant. So in this case we can speak of *material entanglement*. The object not even changed its function but also the user group.

83 Keel, 1989, 282–83.

context.[84] But if the scarab was made on Crete as a local production, we are dealing with the stage of *objectification*, speaking of *relational entanglement*.[85]

Fig. 12 Scarab with a depiction of Taweret, Platanos, Crete CMS II,1, 283 (Image courtesy of the CMS Heidelberg).

transformation

The Proto Genius can be seen as an example for the fourth phase of *transformation*, combining Egyptian and Minoan motifs and ideas not just as an addition to the respective features, but the creation of something new. However, with the Egyptian influence still being recognisable we can speak of an *entangled artefact*.

In a second step, the motif of the Proto Genius was abstracted to the Minoan Genius as another phase of transformation. For this reason, I would like to suggest to distinguish the phase of *transformation* into two sub-phases: In 'phase 4a' we deal with the transformation out of the Egyptian context into the Aegean, finding an *entangled artefact* in the motif of the Proto Genius. The second *transformation* into the Minoan Genius can be understood as another step within the Aegean but detached from the Egyptian influence, which I would like to call 'phase 4b' **(fig. 13)**.

Within the further development of the Minoan Genius, a repetition of these four phases can be assumed, but now considering Crete as a new point of origin. On Crete, an abstraction of the Minoan Genius is traceable, which is connected with its transition into the cultural context of the Mycenaean elite, and assuming a different function or meaning of the motif.

This allows us to recognise some stations of complex entanglements and transfer of motifs in an iconographical analysis supported by some theoretical ideas. Therefore, questions about specific ways of encounter are raised and shall be discussed by some examples.

Way of entries – ways of '*entanglement*'

Dealing with *alterity* and *wayfaring* of objects and ideas in the Mediterranean, some possible 'ways of entries' have to be examined. According to Diamantis Panagiotopoulos, three different ways exist: trade or exchange, securing the daily supplies, long-distance trade and gift-exchange (e.g. tribute).[86]

Long-distance trade, being an expensive but time-saving undertaking, was conducted by financially strong entrepreneurs or political institutions. Operated to the greatest profitability, the visibility of and the exposure to foreign objects are reduced to a small part of an elite.

[84] Following Sambin, the scarab was considered of Egyptian provenience by W. Ward, Sambin 1989, 88.

[85] Some distributions can also be recognised into the south: the motif of the goddess is also found in Kerma, illustrated in ivory inlays on wooden beds in the grave context of the great tumuli, cf. Bonnet 1990, 225, Kat. No. 301. Using as applications on clothing, several other ivory objects depict Taweret with a skirt and knifes in her hands, suggesting another way of *entanglement* in Nubia, cf., Bonnet 1996,102, Kat.No. 103.

[86] Panagiotopulos 2011, 37; Panagiotopulos 2012, 53.

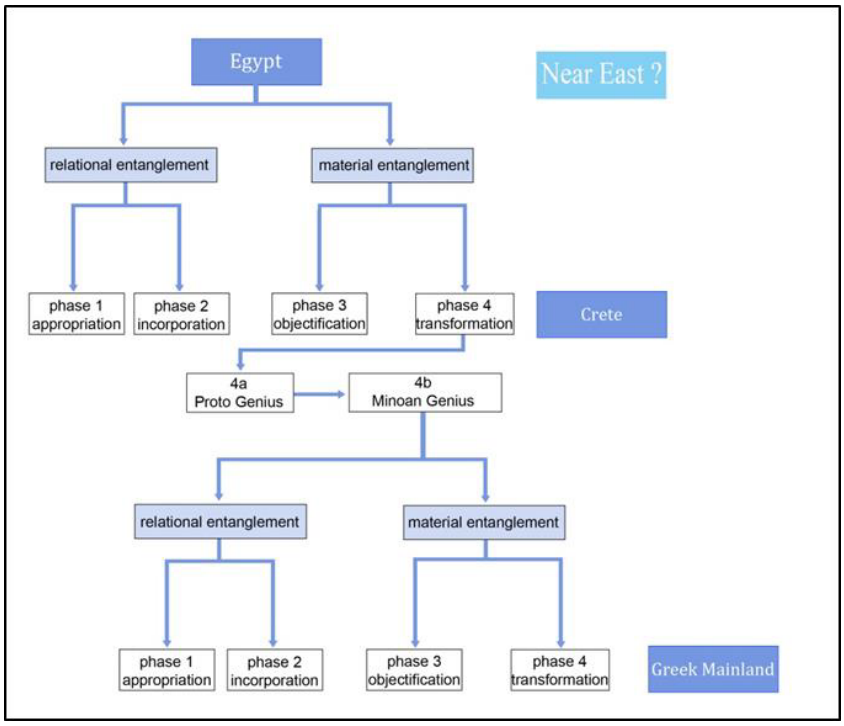

Fig. 13 Entanglement and visualisation of motif transfer between Egypt, Crete and the Greek Mainland (graphic by author).

Particularly in the process of gift-giving, the distribution of foreign objects or so-called 'exotica' is restricted to an illustrious sphere of high ranking elites. Conducive to the self-expression of the receiver of those 'exotica', the artistic scenes of gift-giving illustrate their social status while pushing the relevance of the artefacts presented aside.[87]

In contrast to the rigidity of such elitist ceremonial protocols, small-scale trade providing the daily supply is also discussed by Panagiotopoulos. Concerning the product handling, merchants, sailors and the local population or inhabitants of seaports are involved. So salesmen and consumers play an important role in the context of the exchange of objects. Against this background, foreign objects attain a high rank of visibility and perception leading into a willingness to deal with *alterity*. Even though the role of sailors in this exchange was criticised as a romantic idea, I would like to admit that a certain kind of mediating role cannot be excluded.[88] As the development of this motif is closely connected to the movement of people, I suggest reconsidering these routes according to places of production. As specialised workshops carry besides raw materials and their actual commodities various forms of (even imported) semi-finished products, these locations indicate a possible place of exchange. This includes several seal producing workshops that have to be considered as places of motive-adaption and objectification:

According to Keel, the so-called *Ω*- und *Jaspis-group* of locally produced scarabs originating of Syrian cylinder-seals show an adaption of the Egyptian scarab-motif into the Syrian area.[89] But even more impressive is the group of so-called *Anra*-scarabs combining the Egyptian hieroglyphs a, n, r,

[87] Panagiotopulos 2011, 39; Panagiotopulos 2012, 56.

[88] Panagiotopulos 2012, 54–56.

[89] In detail see Keel 1989, 39–87.

as well as royal Egyptian symbols as part of the decoration, but without transmitting the original context or meaning.[90]

Another good example is the Tell el-Dab'a workshop exhibiting about three hundred scarabs in a well-stratified find-context and providing the possibility to differentiate several stages of seal-production and motif-changes. After having first produced typical Egyptian scarabs, the motifs were then increasingly influenced by the Near East in the later stages. This influence can possibly be explained by the long lasting influence of the Hyksos in the city, representing a possible way of entry and therefore a context, where people, objects and ideas merge.[91] As a result, a wide-ranging distribution of imports can be observed during the second Millennium BCE, especially during the Egyptian New Kingdom. Due to poorly recorded or entirely missing context information, a clear outline seems excessively difficult and may seem incoherent. Nevertheless, we are able to get a better idea of how things travel and how complex their itineraries may be.

Conclusion

To sum up, the development of the Minoan Genius can be followed through the Mediterranean by iconographical comparisons. In adding some theoretical thoughts, it is possible to discuss the transfer of motifs and ideas as dependent on the movement of people, even if they are not aware of doing so. By highlighting some possible points of encounter, we considered how motifs were spread by people who deal with *alterity* at different levels, a concept that the four-layered model of *entanglement* is able to illustrate.

So the travelling of objects may be related to people (e.g. sailor, entrepreneurs, and specialised workmen) who were connected within the Aegean, emphasising the Mediterranean as a space of encounter where the complex mechanism of transfer and distribution by change and exchange takes place.

For example, Weingarten is able to illustrate that the adaption of motifs is driven by the actual choice made by people: she considers the arrival of Taweret as contemporaneous to the introduction of the rhyta as a new vessel type on Crete. Following Robert Koehl, rhyta and beak-spouted ewers constitute a kind of 'a standard Aegean libation set' and therefore, as Taweret is connected with aspects of lustration and purification, a new meaning concerning Taweret, the ewer and rhyta in some ritual roles might be established.[92] In contrast, the motif of Bes and Beset, which were adapted also at the same time, had no long-lasting reception on the island due to an apparently less important role of their functions or no analogy within the Minoan motif-repertoire.[93] This argument is in line with Sambins conclusion, who argues that the adaption of the Taweret-motif is based on active choice of the Minoans, who found something familiar or even attractive within this foreign motif, for example, the connection to an aquatic and vegetable habitat, which is the home of the

[90] Keel 1997, 175–176; For *Anra*-scarabs see in detail Richards 2001.

[91] Mlinar 2004, 113–133.

[92] Weingarten 2013, 374, Koehl 2006, 339.

[93] Within the adaption-processes in the Aegean, Weingarten compared the Egyptian motive Bes with the LM I Zakro Master as shown on e.g. CMS II.7 117, 119, 122; cf. Weingarten 2013, 372. Weingarten also suggests that the main function of Bes as a protector of the sun-god, which was not known in the Aegean and so the actual concept of Bes/Beset was not integrated into the Minoan glyptic repertoire. Nevertheless, Bes is also connected to music and dance, which are important aspects in any culture. Cf. Loeben 2016, 47.

hippopotamus and well known within the Minoan paintings of landscapes.[94]

Within this *meshwork*, the Minoan Genius arose as a new motif while being integrated into several spheres of action. This may have been catalysed by the emerging influence of the Mycenaean culture, and it emphasises that Cyprus plays a subordinate role within this complex model of distribution, but further research needs to be done here. Nevertheless, the examples shown illustrate the complexity of the Mediterranean *meshwork* in which people, things and ideas are closely connected.

[94] Sambin 1989, 92.

Acknowledgments

This article is an excerpt of my M.A. thesis, accepted at the University of Heidelberg in 2014. Therefore, I would like to thank Prof. Dr. J. F. Quack and Prof. Dr. D. Panagiotopoulos for supervising my work. Many thanks go to Prof. Dr. O. Keel as well, who supported me with images of the unpublished scarabs SK 1997.19 and SK 2003.25. Moreover, this article benefits from detailed remarks and constructive feedback by the peer-review, Prof. Dr. E.C. Köhler and Fabian Heil, M.A. Further, I am grateful to all my colleagues and friends having encouraged and supported me with productive discussions: Dr. S. Töpfer, Dr. des. C. Maderna-Sieben, F. Vespi, M.A., S. Gerke, M.A., L. Frank, T. Klein, B.A, and my mother and sister who I want to mention in particular.

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