

Hors-Série **VI**



BAAL

Bulletin
d'**A**rchéologie et
d'**A**rchitecture
Libanaises

Interconnections in the Eastern Mediterranean

Lebanon in the Bronze and Iron Ages

Proceedings of the
International Symposium
Beirut 2008

MINISTÈRE DE LA CULTURE
DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE DES ANTIQUITÉS

Lebanon and Protopalatial Crete: Pottery, Chronology and People

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The very fine Middle Minoan 'Kamare Ware' pottery found in Lebanon is part of the wider issue of Cretan exports to sites throughout the south-eastern Aegean, Anatolia, the Levant, and Egypt at the time of the first palaces. The Kamare Ware at harbour sites and along the Nile is believed to reflect trade routes for a host of products including vital metals and semi-precious stones. This paper reviews the chronological implications of this pottery and the evidence for Cretan trade with Lebanon and its neighbours. It also explores Minoan Crete's special relationship with Lebanon as shown by recent DNA studies and recalled in the Europa myth.

Cretan and Greek connections with Lebanon are mythical. Europa, progenitor of the House of Minos, was the daughter of Agenor, king of Sidon, or Tyre. When Zeus, disguised as a beautiful bull, enticed the Canaanite princess onto his back and took her over the sea to Crete he brought both civilization, and the very name for the continent of which Crete is currently the south-eastern-most extreme. The Europa myth reminded the classical Greeks of their earliest connection to their eastern neighbours, a link recalled in the coinage of Phaistos.

Europa may mean 'wide eyed' or 'broad faced', from the Greek *eurys* and *ops*, which suggest a lunar, and/or bovine countenance. The latter fits well with the form Zeus assumed to seduce her. Ancient authors link her to Astarte, the Canaanite goddess of the full Moon, but her romantic association with the

supreme male god and her maritime aspect link her to Canaanite Asherah, whose Egyptian counterpart is Hathor, the bovine fertility goddess.

Agenor dispatched his sons to find their sister and it was Cadmus, the first of these, whom the later Greeks credit with much of their own cultural enlightenment, especially writing. But Cadmus went to central Greece, and Europa was in Crete laying the foundations for the Minoan civilization; Minos was her first offspring with Zeus.

In the other direction, the Ugaritic texts tell of the Cretan origin of their god Kothar-wa-Khasis, who was renowned for his craftsmanship, much like Greek Daedalus and Hephaistos (Morris 1992, 79-101).

One tale recalls Minoan origins while the other alludes to the Levantine's high regard for the Cretan's artistic skills. But, this is mythology, even less reliable

than history. For modern archaeologists, pottery is the preferred tangible evidence of inter-connections. And, while pottery exchange gives us our relative chronology, it also forces us to contemplate both the mechanics and the motives for that exchange. We shall return to the myths after considering what the pottery tells us.

Minoan cup, S 3011, discovered recently at Sidon, was found inverted - a common Aegean practice in foundation deposits and offerings - possibly to indicate that the vessel's contents were emptied there (Doumet-Serhal 2008, 21-2; MacGillivray 2003; 2008). The cup was carefully placed over a deposit of nearly two hundred animal bone fragments from one sub-adult goat and two young sheep. The cup and bones were set on a four-centimetre thick white plaster floor of Sidon's Middle Bronze Age 2 phase, adjacent to but later than warrior burial 23 of Sidon's Middle Bronze Age 1 phase. This 'Minoan cup assemblage', as it is known, may comprise the remains of a feast, because only the meat-bearing bones, limbs and axial skeleton, were recovered. The assemblage's numerous lamps indicate that it took place at night. This raises the possibility that this funerary feast could have commemorated Astarte as the full Moon. In Egypt, the full Moon was worshipped in the fifteenth day festival in honour of Osiris, lord of the dead. Could there be a link between Lebanese funerary customs and Egyptian ritual? If so, it could explain why in one version of the Egyptian myth Isis travelled to Byblos to find her brother Osiris's body in a Lebanese cedar.

The Sidon cup belongs to Crete's Old Palace, First Palace, or Protopalatial period, modern titles for the time when the Cretans first erect the great court-centred complexes, like Knossos, Phaistos, and Mallia, during the MM IB to MM IIB periods, from approximately 1950 to 1760 BC on current reckoning. In ancient terms, this was during Egypt's mid-12th dynasty.

This was a revolutionary time in Crete. Ceremonies involving large scale eating and drinking took place at the palace sites from their inception in the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age periods, from about 3100 BC, and likely much earlier at Knossos (Day and Wilson 1998). But, these sites were thoroughly remodelled starting in MM IB, approximately 1950 BC, to accommodate new imposing multi-storied

structures adorned with costly well-dressed sandstone and gypsum blocks. These extravagant complexes comprised long, rectangular courts surrounded by ceremonial, industrial and storage facilities (Driessen and others 2002). Analogous ceremonial buildings appear at a number of sites throughout Crete. The largest is at Knossos, next come Malia and Phaistos, Galatas, Kato Zakros, Chania, Archanes, Gournia, Makrygialos, Petras, and probably Palaikastro.

We define large territories associated with these palatial centres on the basis of cultural influence, that is, by the distribution of like artefacts, for example pottery wares and styles (Knappett 1999). This is the Minoan 'Warring States' period characterized by violent competition between the Cretan states, similar to that seen during Crete's Hellenistic period. This belligerent situation is most evident in the appearance of fortifications and fortified control posts along the well-built road system that connected these communities. The Cretan mid-rib swords and daggers are a further reminder that all was not peaceful at this time, and that Crete's competing states relied heavily on imported metals, as Crete has little metal of her own (Wiener 1990). This quest for raw materials may account for the Minoan pottery found throughout the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean starting now (Knappett and Nikolakopoulou 2005)

Egyptian artefacts begin to arrive in Crete in the EM III and MMIA periods (Betancourt 2005; Weingarten 2005; Phillips 2008), but the subsequent Protopalatial period is when bureaucracy, in the form of clay sealings, inscribed documents, and seals, comes into play (Weingarten 1986). Some Minoan pictographs are evidently adapted from Egyptian Hieroglyphs, most likely developed when Cretans lived at el-Lahun and Harageh and worked on the Hawara Labyrinth, Amenemhat III's funerary temple, believed in antiquity to have inspired the mythical Daedalus to build a smaller replica for Minos at Knossos in Crete (MacGillivray 2002). Foreign inscriptions on ceramics at Lahun may record this developmental writing stage (Quirke 2005, 93-6). And, the Cretans may not have been the only foreign workers to convert the Egyptian writing to their language. The Byblite script, which has many signs in common with Minoan hieroglyphic and Linear A, is also thought to have derived in part

from Egyptian hieroglyphs (Mendenhall 1985). The Cretans also import a number of Egyptian concepts such as the *djew*, or horizon symbol, which Evans called the 'horns of consecration', and Tawaret, the hippopotamus deity (Weingarten 1991).

The evidence for the Cretan presence at el-Lahun is the discovery of numerous fragments of Minoan pottery in the rubbish heaps from the worker's village there (Kemp and Merrillees 1980, 6-99). These show that Minoan Kamares Ware was not available exclusively to the Egyptian elite, but was used by the workers themselves, some of whom were probably Cretan. Analysis of these MM IIA imports shows that they come from Crete's Phaistos region, and not Knossos (Fitton and others 1999).

Similar to the Lahun pottery is the handle of a Kamares Ware MM II bridge-spouted jar found beneath the New Kingdom treasury at Karnak North (Jacquet-Gordon 2007, 321 Fig. 5).

Among the Minoan sherds from Lisht is part of a composite jar in the Alternating Red and White Floral Style, typical of MM IB Palaikastro in East Crete (Kemp and Merrillees 1980, 5-6; Floyd 1997; MacGillivray 1998, 104; Knappett 2007). The Minoan juglet from tomb 88 at Qubbet el-Hawa near Aswan is made in the same style and likely comes from the same MM IB East Cretan source (Kemp and Merrillees 1980, 176-219; MacGillivray 1998, 103).

Fragments of typically Cretan MM IIA oval-mouthed amphorae were found at Tell el Dab'a (Czerny 1998). The fragments come from 'below the temple level I and thus before the reign of Senwosret III', and are currently placed in Amenemhat II's reign (Merrillees 2003, 137). Interestingly, these jars are also imports from Phaistos, not Knossos (see Levi 1976, Pl. 71).

From a more recent, early 13th dynasty, context at Tell el Dab'a come the fragments of a Cretan Wavy-line cup typical of MM IIB contexts at Knossos (Walberg 1991; 1998; MacGillivray 1995; 1998, 105). Also typical of MM IIB Knossos in form and decoration is the bridge-spouted jar from late 12th dynasty tomb 416 at Abydos (Kemp and Merrillees 1980, 118-9). The Abydos jar almost certainly comes from the Knossos workshops where straight-sided cups and bridge-spouted jars were made as 'tea

sets' (MacGillivray 1987). The base of a cup from Knossos belongs to the same set as the Abydos jar (MacGillivray 1998, 62 fig. 2.4, 105).

Seventeen kilometres north of Luxor at el-Tod, four copper chests, two inscribed with 12th dynasty pharaoh Amenemhat II's name, contained numerous foreign objects including a hoard of silver vessels (Bisson de la Roque and others 1953; Pierrat-Bonnefois 2008). These, primarily bowls and cups, resemble most closely the ceramic forms of the MM IB pottery groups at Knossos (MacGillivray 1998, 103-4). So, Amenemhat II may be linked to MM IB at el-Tod and the transition to MM IIA may belong to his reign, as the MM IIA oval-mouthed amphorae at tell el Dab'a show. MM IIA is a long period, continuing into Amenemhat III's reign, as the Lahun pottery demonstrates.

These Minoan pots in Egypt have much to tell us about Crete. They show us that the MM IB pottery found at Lisht and Qubbet el-Hawa comes from the Palaikastro region of Eastern Crete, the MM IIA pottery at Tell el-Dab'a and Lahun is from the Phaistos region, and the MM IIB pottery is from Knossos. These could reflect shifting centres of Cretan power.

They also provide us with reliable relative chronological links between:

MM IB, MM IIA and Amenemhat II,

MM IIA and Amenemhat II and III,

MM IIB and the early 13th dynasty.

The end of MM IIA is linked to early in dynasty 13 by the scarab from a MM IIA destruction deposit on the Royal Road at Knossos (Höflmayer 2007, 120-2). The transition from MM IIA to MM IIB, then, takes place early in Egypt's 13th dynasty, as the MM IIB Wavy-line Style cup from Tell el Dab'a shows.

Returning to the Levant, we can now place the Sidon cup in its larger context. It is a Type 4 Tall-rimmed Angular Cup found at Knossos only in the MM IIA period (MacGillivray 1998, 73; 2007, 126-7). But the cup's form and decoration place its likely origins in Phaistos, where this type is much more common than at Knossos. This Phaistos origin reflects what we saw with the MM IIA pottery in Egypt.

The silver rounded cup with embossed interlocking spirals from Byblos tomb I, assigned to the

time of Amenemhat III, recalls MM IIA Egg-shell Ware, which could make it contemporary with the Sidon cup providing another chronological link with Egypt's mid-12th dynasty, but it also resembles MM IIB Precision Stamped Ware (Virolleaud 1922, 285 fig. 5; MacGillivray 1998, 106). If the latter, the silver Byblos cup joins the majority of the Minoan pottery from Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, which conforms with Knossian MM IIB types and may also reflect the shift from Phaistos to Knossos that we saw in Egypt.

The most popular MM IIB ceramic import into the Levant is the Wavy-line Cup, like the one from Tell el-Dab'a. Examples are found in Syria at el-Mishrife, ancient Qatna, near the Orontes (Du Mesnil du Buisson 1926, 324 Fig. 41), at Ugarit/Ras Shamra Moyen 2 (Merrillees 2003, 127-31), and at Ashkelon in early 13th dynasty levels (Stager 2002, 357 Fig. 19). An uncertain number of Minoan cups and jars from tombs at Byblos and Beirut are also stylistically Cretan MM IIB (Merrillees 2003, 131-5). These highlight the fact that Minoan cups in the Levant occur in funerary contexts, and so are viewed quite differently than they are in Egypt.

Thus, the Minoan pottery in Lebanon follows the same pattern as that in Egypt, the MM IIA imports come from Phaistos and those in MM IIB from Knossos.

This likely reflects Cretan politics at the time. MM II is characterized by the erection of fortifications and innovations in weaponry. The end of MM IIB is marked by violent conflagration everywhere but Knossos, and the subsequent MM IIIA period sees Knossian influence throughout the island and abroad, which may indicate the emergence of Knossos as Crete's leading state. This may explain why the earliest North-Syrian, or Canaanite, jars were imported exclusively to Knossos (MacGillivray 1998, 90 Fig. 2.26, Pl. 150).

A brief journey into Syria at this time is quite revealing. This is when the Mari texts record precious Kaptarite (Cretan) drinking vessels, perhaps the next generation of those in the Tod treasure, the silver prototypes for fine Kamares Ware cups and bowls. Mari's ruler Zimrilim writes of Kaptarite cloth, perhaps either textiles dyed with luxurious royal purple produced in Cretan workshops, or a particularly fine weave, a Kaptarite weapon (*kakkum kaptaru*) partially

gilded and inlaid with lapis lazuli, and a vessel, which he offers to his senior contemporary Hammurabi, sixth Babylonian king, who rules from approximately 1792 to 1750 BC. Zimrilim ascends in 1779 BC, in the final years of Egypt's Dynasty 12, and his archive is sealed when Hammurabi, apparently not appeased with the gifts, destroys his palace at Mari in approximately 1758 BC, during Egypt's dynasty 13.

As we have seen, this early dynasty 13 period is exactly contemporary with MM IIB, as the cups from Tell el Dab'a and Ashkelon demonstrate, so we can speculate that Hammurabi's treasured Kaptarite dagger is probably much like the exceptional MM IIB examples from Malia (Pellon 1983, 701-3).

The possible Aegean, perhaps even Minoan, origin of the linked spirals that border Zimrilim's famous 'investiture' painting is intriguing. They belong to the time when Kaptarites/Minoans are trading for vital metals in North Syria and the Levant, but undoubtedly also exchanging ideas. Clairy Palyvou suggests that Aegean architects introduce their style of anti-seismic architecture to Ugarit at this time (Palyvou 2007). And, some Middle Bronze Age architecture at Byblos incorporates anti-seismic set-backs of the sort that appear in Crete with the first palaces, but there are chronological problems to be sorted out here before the direction of influence can be determined with any confidence.

The Minoan Sidon cup reflects a time when Phaistos was trading with Egypt and the Levant. This could be what the later Phaistians recalled in their Zeus and Europa myth. MM IIA is, after all, when the Cretan palaces are consolidated, and their complex bureaucracy and script first appear. And, they could be recalling something else. Recent Y-DNA studies on the Cretan population show that the founder population that arrived in approximately 7000 BC is identified by the J2a-M410 haplogroup, which originates in the Caucasus and Cappadocia (King and others 2008). But new populations arrive in approximately 3100 BC, which is when we place the start of the Cretan Bronze Age and certainly postulate the arrival of newcomers bearing metallurgy, among other novelties. These newcomers include a group identified by the J2a1h-M319 haplogroup characteristic of Syro-Palestine, on present reckoning.

Some herald these newcomers as the impetus for the Bronze Age civilization that emerged in Crete (Betancourt 2008). Could the memory of this population movement, which may have included additions to the pantheon, be at the root of the Europa myth - the tale of the Cannanite princess who gave birth to Cretan society? If so, the Lebanon may have been have a part of the Cretan's nostalgia when they returned there in MM IIA.

Acknowledgement

I took up wholeheartedly Claude Doumet-Serhal's invitation to study the Middle Bronze Age Minoan cup from Sidon in 2003 because I had heard so many wonderful things about Lebanon from Vronwy Hankey, who lived in Beirut while her husband Henry was British ambassador there. Vronny was one of my teachers at Knossos and advised me when I set up my classification of the Kamares ware there. So, it gives me great pleasure to recall her enthusiasm for both the Lebanon and Minoan Crete as I link the two here. I am also very grateful to all of the conference organisers for inviting me to speak about this interesting relationship.

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