

The Perceived Value of Minoan and Minoanizing Pottery in Egypt

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Abstract

This paper investigates the Egyptian valuation of imported Minoan and locally produced Minoanizing pottery: that is, why Egyptians found this pottery desirable, which Egyptians wanted it, and which were able to acquire it. In order to address these questions, this study first reviews the archaeological contexts of all Minoan and Minoanizing pottery in Egypt, and then compares this archaeological evidence to the textual and iconographic data on Egyptian attitudes towards Minoan goods. The results suggest that while ownership of this pottery may have carried some cultural cachet as a mark of cosmopolitan sensibilities, it was not restricted to the highest officials. Instead, the more widespread availability of Minoan and Minoanizing pottery may have enabled Egyptians from various socioeconomic backgrounds to participate in an internationalizing cultural milieu.

Keywords: *New Kingdom Egypt, Minoans, trade/exchange, concepts of value, prestige, status, pottery styles*

Introduction

Amongst many goods traded between Bronze Age Egypt and Crete (e.g., Warren 2000; on Bronze Age trade generally, see Sherratt and Sherratt 1991; Bevan 2007: 30-38), pottery attracts particular attention as a chronological indicator. Many scholars use Minoan pottery in Egypt to link the Aegean's relative chronology to the more secure Egyptian absolute chronology (see, e.g., Cline's 2008 overview of the resulting debate). Comparatively little discussion, however, has focused on the *meanings and values* Egyptians attached to imported Minoan pottery and its locally-produced imitations.

Building on the work of Simmel (1930: 3-29), van Wijngaarden (1999: 3) defines value as an interaction between the desirability of an object and the difficulty of accessing it (cf. Bevan 2007: 8-18): high-value objects are both extremely

desirable and extremely hard to acquire. Archaeologists may examine *accessibility* by observing the restrictions on the distribution of objects, but without texts it is harder to measure these objects' *desirability*. In Egypt, however, a variety of iconographic and textual references to Minoans and Minoan imports provides just such data. Most of these documents originate in a palatial or otherwise elite setting and seldom refer to pottery *per se*. Nonetheless they do shed light on the broader question of Egyptian attitudes toward Minoan society and culture, and the very absence of pottery from elite representations of desirable Minoan imports is itself a clue to the pottery's perceived value (or lack thereof) relative to other goods. Additionally, the archaeological contexts of Minoan and Minoanizing pottery in Egypt provide essential information on these objects' use and valuation. In order to determine

who owned these vessels and how they used them, this paper first reviews the archaeological contexts of all currently-published imported or imitated vessels of the Middle Minoan (MM) IB through Late Minoan (LM) IB periods in Egypt, and then compares this archaeological evidence to textual and iconographic data on Egyptian attitudes towards Minoan goods.

This study excludes all sherds of possible Mycenaean origin (e.g., Kemp and Merrillees 1980: 232, 242; Hankey and Leonard 1998: 32-33). After the reign of Tuthmosis II (ca. 1492-1479 BC), Aegean vessels in Egypt were mostly Mycenaean, very different in form and function from their Minoan predecessors; and Egyptian

material disappeared from Crete after LM IIIB (Phillips 2005). No pre-MM Aegean pottery is attested in Egypt, although Egyptian and Egyptianizing artifacts appear in Crete as early as the Prepalatial period (Phillips 1991; 1996; 2008; Carinci 2000: 31-33; Pini 2000; Bevan 2007: 94-96; Colburn 2008).

As the focus of the present investigation is not primarily chronological, the ongoing debate on high versus low Aegean chronologies is beyond this study's scope. Table 1 summarizes the two major arguments for correlating the Aegean chronology to the Egyptian sequence; but instead of assigning absolute dates to Minoan periods, this study merely offers the current Egyptological

DATE BC	EGYPTIAN CHRONOLOGY (after Shaw 2000: 480-481)	LOW CHRONOLOGY (after Warren and Hankey 1989, Dickinson 1994: 13, 19)	HIGH CHRONOLOGY (after Manning 1988: 56; Dickinson 1994: 13, 19; Cline 1994: 5-7)
2300	First Intermediate Period	EM III/MM IA (Prepalatial)	
2200			
2100			
2000	Middle Kingdom	MM IB/IIA – MM IIB/IIIA (Protopalatial)	MM III
1900			
1800			
1700	Second Intermediate Period	Late MM IIIA – LM IB (Neopalatial)	LM IA
1600			LM IB
1500			LM II LM IIIA1
1400	New Kingdom	LM II, IIIA1	LM IIIA2
1300		LM IIIA2, LM IIIB	LM IIIB
1200		LM IIIC	LM IIIC
1100			

Table 1. Concordance of Egyptian chronology with the high and low Aegean chronologies.

consensus on the dates of the *Egyptian* sites that produced Minoan vessels. Dates of kings' reigns follow Shaw's (2000: 480-81) version of the conventional Egyptian chronology and may have a 10-20-year margin of error (Kitchen 1991; cf. Cline 2008: 545, n. 4).

The Minoan pottery imported and imitated in Egypt consists almost exclusively of fine wares, many closely related to those frequently attested in elite spheres (among other contexts) on Crete. In Egypt, these vessels were accessible to individuals from a fairly wide range of social strata, and they appear in a broad variety of contexts, including settlement debris and private tombs. As van Wijngaarden (1999) has shown for Mycenaean pottery in Late Bronze Age Ugarit, foreign imports need not always be high-status goods. Although a strict view of exchange and exotica (Helms 1988; 1993) might imply that imported goods should always be objects of great prestige, the data for Minoan and Minoanizing pottery

in Egypt suggest a more nuanced picture. While ownership of these wares may have carried a certain cultural cachet as a way to display cosmopolitan sensibilities, it was not restricted to the highest officials. Instead, the more widespread availability of Minoan and Minoanizing pottery may have enabled Egyptians from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds to participate in an internationalizing cultural milieu.

Types of Middle and Late Minoan Pottery in Egypt

During the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2055-1650 BC), most Minoan pottery in Egypt was the fine, polychrome, often wheel-made Protopalatial pottery known as Kamares ware (Walberg 1978; 1987a; 1987b; 2001). Kamares ware appears in a variety of settings on Crete, including (though not restricted to) palatial contexts and religious sanctuaries that received elite dedications (Walberg 1987b; see Walberg 1983

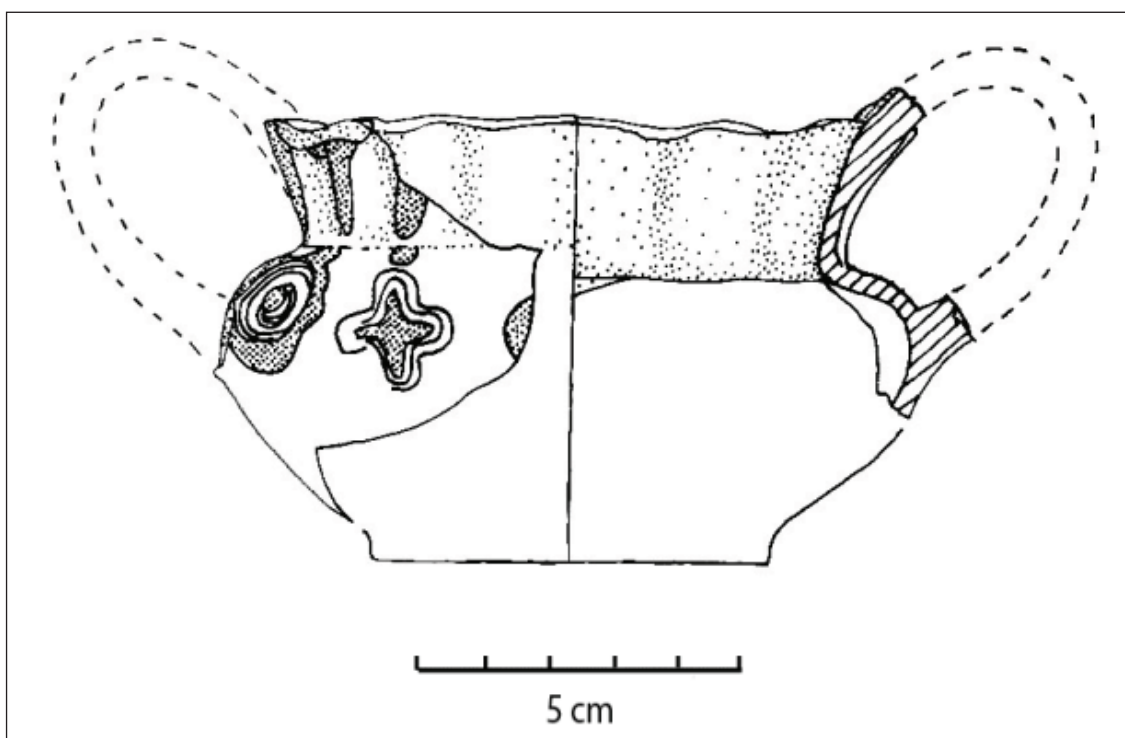


Figure 1. Vessel BM A 562 from Kahun (Table 2, row 1): an Egyptian-made vessel with Minoanizing form and decoration. (After Kemp and Merrillees 1980: 69, fig. 28.)

Site	Minoan or Minoanizing Pottery	Context	Previous Publications
Kahun	17 imported Kamares sherds; 9 locally produced sherds with Minoanizing form or painted decoration	Settlement; findsites minimally recorded (Kemp and Merrillees 1980: 80; cf. Gallorini 1998)	Petrie (1891); Petrie <i>et al.</i> (1923); Kemp and Merrillees (1980: 57-79, figs. 22-32); Walberg (1983: 142); Booth (2005: 54); Warren (1985: 148-49); Fitton <i>et al.</i> (1998); Karetsou (2000: nos. 26, 27ac); Merrillees (2003: 136); Phillips (2006)
El-Haraga cemetery (dump)	Up to 20 pieces of Kamares ware, MM IIA	Settlement debris, date between Sesostri II and 2nd Intermediate Period	Engelbach (1923); Kemp and Merrillees (1980: 6-14, figs. 3-5); Walberg (1983: 141-42); Warren (1985: 148-49); Merrillees (2003: 137)
El-Haraga cemetery (Tomb 326)	2 locally produced Minoanizing bowls with crinkled rims	Tomb	Kemp and Merrillees (1980: 21-39); Grajetski <i>et al.</i> (2002); cf. Walberg (1987a: 32) for the forms
El-Lisht (fill west of Amenemhat I's pyramid)	4-6 Classical Kamares sherds, MM IB-II; 2 sherds may be imitations (Walberg 1983: 141)	Unclear; sherds may have originated from a Middle Kingdom cemetery, or from a village above it	Kemp and Merrillees (1980: 1-4, fig. 1); Walberg (1983: 141); Karetsou 2000: cat. nos. 28-29d; Merrillees (2003: 136), with refs.
El-Lisht (Tomb 879)	Egyptian-made jug; MM III and Syro Palestinian stylistic influence	Tomb	Kemp and Merrillees (1980: 220-25); Kantor (1965: 23-24); Warren (1985: 149); Warren (1985: 149; 1995: 3); Åström (1998: 257); Hankey and Leonard (1998: 30)
Abydos (Tomb 416)	MM II bridge-spouted Kamares jar.	Tomb	Kemp and Merrillees (1980: 108-12, 117-19, fig. 38); Warren (1985: 149); Carinci (2000: 36); cf. Walberg (1983: 142-43)
Qubbet el-Hawa (Tomb 88)	Kamares or possibly imitation Kamares vase with floral appliqués	Tomb	Edel (1980); Kemp and Merrillees (1980: 215-19); Walberg (1983: 70, 143); Warren (1985: 148); Merrillees (2003: 136-37); for Minoan parallels, cf. Kemp and Merrillees (1980: 215); Walberg (1983: 143); Helck (1987: 279); Carinci 2000: 36; Merrillees (2003: 136-37). On an Egyptian precedent for the vase's appliqué decoration, see Schäfer (1964 [1903]); Donnat (1999); and Darnell and Darnell (2002: 76) on <i>Prunkgefässe</i> . Such vessels can appear among foreigners' tributes in Egyptian tombs (Hallmann 2006), but the form is Egyptian in origin (Schäfer 1964 [1903]: 43; cf. Hallmann 2006: 162).
Buhen	Egyptian vase; Minoanizing painted decoration	Tomb	Randall-Maciver and Woolley (1911: 132-33, 199, 233, no. 10738, pl. 50); Kemp and Merrillees (1980: 102-04, fig. 35)
Tell el-Daba'a	Several fragments of a Kamares MM IIB cup (Figures 2, 3); one MM IIIA/B post-Kamares sherd	MM IIB cup fragments: gardens of 13th-dynasty palace. Post-Kamares sherd: unstratified context.	Walberg (1991: 115-18, pls. 1-2; 1992); Bietak <i>et al.</i> (1994: no. 234); Bietak (1995: 19); MacGillivray (1995); Warren (1995: 3); Bietak (1997: 104); Hankey and Leonard (1998: 35); Morris (1998: 282-83); Bietak and Marinatos (2000: 40); McGovern (2000: 52, 155); Merrillees (2003: 137-38)
'Ezbet Rushdi	Sherds from MM IIIA "Oval Mouth" amphorae	12th-dynasty domestic complex, reign of Amenemhat II	Czerny (1998: 46, fig. 21); Bietak and Marinatos (2000: 40); Merrillees (2003: 137); cf. Bietak and Dörner (1998: 15, 28)
Wadi Gawasis	Sherd from a cup of possible Kamares ware	Mid-12th to early 13th Dynasty deposit at a Red Sea port site; the sherd and its context still await final publication, but the preliminary report suggests a multi-functional activity area possibly involving food consumption, preparation, and storage.	Wallace-Jones (2008: see esp. n. 24)

Table 2. Middle Minoan imports and imitations from Middle Kingdom contexts in Egypt and Nubia.



Figure 2. Fragment of the base of a Kamares vessel, inner side, from the 13th-dynasty palace gardens at Tell el-Daba'a (Table 2, row 9). Base diameter 5.5 cm; wall thickness 2 mm. (After Hein 1994: no. 234.)



Figure 3. Fragment of the base of an imported Kamares vessel, outer side, from the 13th-dynasty palace gardens at Tell el-Daba'a (Table 2, row 9). Base diameter 5.5 cm; wall thickness 2 mm. (After Hein 1994: no. 234.)



Figure 4. The Qubbet el-Hawa vase (Table 2, row 7). Height: 10 cm. (After Edel 1980: 199, Abb. 60.)

for non-palatial MM pottery). Many Kamares forms are designed for eating and drinking (Day and Wilson 1998: 350-57), perhaps suggesting conspicuous consumption at feasts (Wright 2004). The definitive catalog of MM pottery in Egypt remains Kemp and Merrillees (1980), although one must now add the more recent finds from Tell el-Daba'a and 'Ezbet Rushdi. Table 2 summarizes current knowledge on MM pottery in Egypt (see also Figures 1-4).

Post-Kamares Minoan imports in the Second Intermediate Period (1650-1550 BC) and early New Kingdom (1550, through at least the reign of Tuthmosis II, 1492-1479 BC) were primarily Late Minoan fine wares (Table 3; Figure 5). LM pottery in Egypt was also typically high quality, and its frequently ornate painting and fine fabrics testify to its status as a prestige item on Crete (Warren 1995: 8; Hankey and Leonard

1998: 35-36). Egyptian potters at Tell el-Daba'a also imitated one vessel type—the rhyton, typically associated with Minoan cult activities such as ritual processions, libation, and communal drinking (Walberg 1987b: 171; Koehl 2000: 99-100; on Type III CV Conical rhyta, see Koehl 2006: 65, 343, 353). Egyptian craftsmen also produced faience rhyta (Koehl 2000; 2006: 238-20), although non-pottery vessels are outside this study's scope.

It is still debatable whether Minoan palaces controlled long-distance trade or whether Crete produced independent/semi-independent merchants; even in Mycenaean times, the absence of long-distance trade from the Linear B texts obscures the palaces' role in exchange (see the overview of these problems in Koehl 2008a: 270). In Egypt, traders (*šwtj*) were typically commissioned by temples or officials, but may also have car-

Site	Minoan or Minoanizing Pottery	Context	Previous Publications
Sidmant (Cemetery A, Tomb 137)	LM IB hole-mouthed pot (Figure 5)	Tomb. This pot is the only LM IB vessel found through scientific excavation in Egypt (Merrillees and Winter 1972: 108).	Merrillees (1972: 283); Kemp and Merrillees (1980: 228-31, fig. 70); Warren (1985: 150)
Sidmant?	LM IB bridge-spouted jug handle	Seemingly from the excavations of the British School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1919-1921; possibly from a tomb at Sidmant	Kemp and Merrillees (1980: 226-28, 230, fig. 71)
Abydos (Tomb 328)	Rim of a LM IB spouted bowl	Tomb, late MK/2nd Intermediate Period; disturbed	Kemp and Merrillees (1980: 232-42, fig. 72); Warren (1985: 149)
Abydos	Probable LM sherds, possibly from a bridge-spouted jug	Possibly from a tomb; context unclear	Kemp and Merrillees (1980: 240-42, fig. 75)
Aniba	Imitation LM I alabastron	Tomb, possibly that of an Egyptianized Nubian; New Kingdom	Woolley (1910: 47-48); Kemp and Merrillees (1980: 242-43); Warren (1985: 150)
Kerma	W. Stevenson Smith (1965: 39-40; cf. Warren 1985: 150) identified one spiral-decorated sherd as Aegean, but this was probably a misidentification; the fabric is local, and the decoration is not sufficiently distinctive to prove an Aegean link (Kemp and Merrillees 1980: 244; Hankey and Leonard 1998: 31).	Room in the fortified Lower Deffufa	W. Stevenson Smith (1865: 39-40); Kemp and Merrillees (1980: 244); Warren (1985: 150); Hankey and Leonard (1998: 31)
Arminna	Imitation LM rhyton	Tomb, 18th dynasty	Simpson (1963: 31, fig. 24, pl. XV); Koehl (2000: 96)
Tell el-Daba'a	Several imitation LM IA rhyta and a fragmentary amphoriskos, perhaps Levantine in origin, whose decoration shows LM IA affinities (Hein 1994: 261, no. 359; Bietak 1996: 70-72; Manning 1999: 114-15; Bietak 2004: 209-210)	Fragmentary rhyta: Tuthmoside waste deposit. Complete rhyton: 18th-dynasty palace magazine. Amphoriskos: Tuthmoside waste deposit associated with palace.	Hein (1994: 245, 261, nos. 314, 359); Bietak (1996: 70-72); Hankey and Leonard (1998: 35); Manning (1999: 114-15); Bietak (2000: 192; 2004: 209-210); Karetsou (2000: no. 126); Bietak <i>et al.</i> (2001: 37, 41, fig. 6, no. 7)
Kom Rabi'a	LM sherd, probably from a bridge-spouted vase, but possibly a conical rhyton or baggy alabastron (Warren and Hankey 1989: 139-40)	Stratum of mud and mud-brick debris within a settlement	Warren and Hankey (1989: 139); Bourriau and Eriksson (1997); Hankey and Leonard (1998: 31)
Deir el-Medina?	Imitation LM IA rhyton	Unclear; possibly from Deir el-Medina	Koehl (2006: 239, no. E5)
Egypt; provenance unknown	The LM IB "Abbott Jug" and two LM IB cups. (Extant records are unclear on the origins of other LM IB vessels potentially from Egypt, such as the "Marseilles ewer" and two other cups; see Merrillees 1972: 284.)	Old museum records, publications, and residues on the vessels testify to Egyptian origins, although specific sites are unknown. The excellent preservation of the "Abbott Jug" implies a funerary findspot (Merrillees and Winter 1972: 106).	Kemp and Merrillees (1980: 226); Merrillees (1972); Merrillees and Winter (1972); Karetsou (2000: nos. 120a-121)
Gurob	LM IIIA:2 conical rhyton	Tomb, late 18th dynasty	Koehl (2006: 65, 170, 345-364, with bibliography)
Nubia; provenance unknown	Imitation LM IA rhyton with red-painted rim	Said to come from a New Kingdom context; no further information available (Holthoer 1977: 91).	Holthoer (1977: 91-92, pls. 20, 53); Koehl (2006: 239)

Table 3. Late Minoan imports and imitations in Egypt and Nubia.

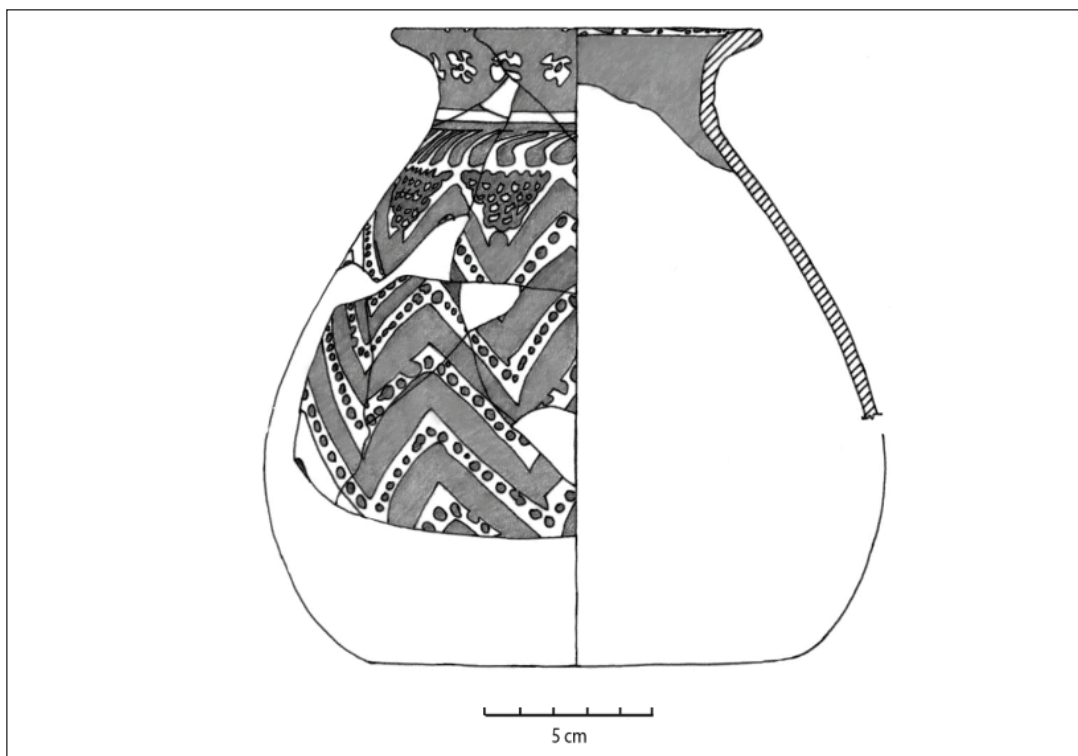


Figure 5. Late Minoan IB pot from Tomb 137, Cemetery A, Sidmant (Table 3, row 1). (After Kemp and Merrillees 1980: 229, fig. 70.)

ried out informal transactions on the side (Kemp 1991: 257; Warburton 1997: 308, 323-24).

Archaeological Contexts of Minoan/Minoanizing Pottery in Egypt

As Tables 2 and 3 suggest, the findspots of Minoan and imitation-Minoan pottery in Egypt suggest a diverse range of social contexts. Many vessels come from settlement contexts, especially at Kahun, el-Haraga, and el-Lisht, and probably saw domestic use (Table 2, rows 1-5; Figure 1). Kemp and Merrillees (1980: 285; cf. Merrillees 2003: 139) somewhat misleadingly characterize these sites' inhabitants as 'people of humble means'; but the urban complex that included Kahun and el-Haraga was not just any community. The site was devoted to the administration of the mortuary cult of Sesostris II (reigned 1877-70 BC), housing not only workmen on royal tombs, but also the dead king's priests and cult officiants (Kemp 1983: 92, 103, 149; Kemp

1991: 149; O'Connor 1997). Many papyri, including private letters (Collier and Quirke 2002), testify to a literate, educated population at Kahun, and the Minoan sherds need not only have come from smaller houses (Fitton *et al.* 1998: 131; Walberg 2001: 17). Rather, these sherds came from various places in the town, including dumps, and specific find sites were only recorded minimally (Kemp and Merrillees 1980: 80; Gallorini 1998). The pottery collected by the excavators may well have stressed unusual pieces such as the Minoan material, biasing their representation in the corpus as a whole. Nonetheless, the high amount of Minoan pottery at these sites probably relates to their advantageous placement for trade within the newly prosperous Fayum (Kemp and Merrillees 1980: 87-88). At Lisht, the presence of foreign vessels recalls the proximity of Itjtawy, the 12th- and 13th-dynasty royal capital, but the vessels' contexts (Table 2, rows 4, 5) suggest private ownership.

Funerary findspots are also common (Table 2, rows 3, 5-8; Table 3, rows 1-5, 7), and the accompanying grave goods suggest that access to these vessels was not limited to elites (Carinci 2000: 36; Walberg 2001: 17; Merrillees 2003: 139, see the tomb owners as 'middle class'). For example, one modest burial at Sidmant (Table 3, row 1; Figure 5) contained, besides a LM IB pot, merely 'a throwing stick, a corn winnow and a wooden *ushabtī*' (Merrillees 1972: 283). In contrast, a LM IB spouted bowl from one tomb at Abydos (Table 3, row 3) belonged to someone higher in status; a stele lists the deceased's titles as 'steward' and 'reckoner of cattle' (Kemp and Merrillees 1980: 234-35, fig. 73), showing he was a man of some position, although not a court official. Given the heavy looting of national officials' tombs, it is impossible to say whether their burials contained comparable quantities of Minoan/Minoanizing pottery. Nevertheless, a Kamares cup from the gardens of the 13th-dynasty Tell el-Daba'a palace (Table 2, row 9; Figures 2, 3) demonstrates that such vessels could appear in highly elite settings also. Overall, the pottery appears in a range of social contexts, and there is no evidence for its restriction to any single echelon of Egyptian society.

Furthermore, the tombs' geographical spread indicates the penetration of Minoan/Minoanizing pottery throughout all of Egypt, even into Nubia. Settlement findspots concentrate in Lower Egypt and the Fayum, but the tombs range from areas in or near the Fayum (el-Haraga, Sidmant, el-Lisht, and Gurob—see Table 2, rows 3, 5; Table 3, rows 1, 2, 12), to Abydos, Qubbet el-Hawa, and perhaps Deir el-Medina in Upper Egypt (Table 2, rows 6, 7; Table 3, row 3 and perhaps also row 4, 10; Figure 4), and on to Arminna, Aniba, and Buhen in Nubia (Table 2, row 8; Table 3, rows 5, 7, 13). The garrisoned Egyptian forts at Middle Kingdom Aniba and Buhen engaged, among other activities, in trade with local populations (Kemp

1991: 128-36). Such interactions ultimately contributed to an increasingly fluid interplay between Nubian and Egyptian cultural identities in Lower Nubia, particularly in the New Kingdom (Buzon 2006), and tombs with imitation Aegean pottery and Egyptian-style artifacts might belong to either Egyptians or Egyptianized Nubians. Either way, the presence of Minoanizing artifacts as far south as Lower Nubia demonstrates the extent of these objects' appeal, far from their Mediterranean origin.

Finally, at Tell el-Daba'a, locally-made Minoanizing rhyta even appear in possible ritual contexts. As Koehl (2006: 343) notes, two miniature rhyta 'were discovered with a large number of vessels, most of which were miniatures, in an outdoor cult spot... With them were many small handleless cups, suggesting a ritual that involved drinking or toasting'. The rhyta also possessed strainers, suggesting that these vessels 'were used to strain a mixed, probably fermented, beverage' (Koehl 2006: 343), just as this particular rhyton type (Koehl's Type III CV Conical) was used in the Aegean. Koehl (2006: 343) further proposes that a third rhyton may come from a temple precinct, but the context is ambiguous (Hein 1998: 553), and the vessel's association with the temple is uncertain. The miniature rhyta, however, do provide plausible evidence for the use of Minoan vessels in a way paralleling their use in the Aegean.

These vessels' owners seem not merely to have admired their appearance, but to have been familiar with foreign cultural behaviors associated with their use. This singular engagement with Minoan cultural practices on their own terms, rather than through the lens of Egyptian tradition, may derive from the unusual nature of the Tell el-Daba'a site. Inhabited by people of a number of different cultural backgrounds (Bietak 1997), this was in many ways an atypical settlement, and it should not be surprising if people there used Minoan pottery in different ways than in the rest of Egypt. Also, if the

famous 18th-dynasty Tell el-Daba'a wall paintings are taken to indicate the activity of actual Aegean artists—or at the very least artists intimately familiar with Aegean craftsmanship and iconography (see discussion below)—the local population possibly had some exposure to Aegean customs. During the Middle Kingdom, in contrast, many Minoan vessels may have reached Egypt via Near Eastern merchants, so Egyptians need not have been as familiar with Minoan practices. Before the Late Bronze Age, evidence for direct contact between Minoans and Egyptians is equivocal, and Syrian or Cypriot intermediaries may have handled much of the exchange (Kemp and Merrillees 1980: 283; Phillips 1996: 465-66; Hankey and Leonard 1998: 34; Merrillees 1998: 154; Hood 2000).

Textual and Iconographic Evidence for Egyptian Perceptions of the Aegean

In contrast to earlier periods, the early 18th dynasty (1550-1352 BC, Ahmose through Amenhotep III) provides strong evidence for direct Minoan-Egyptian contact (Watrous 1992: 172-78; Carinci 2000: 31). Numerous iconographic and textual allusions to the Aegean from this period shed light on Egyptian perceptions of Minoans and Minoan imports. Following the Egyptian belief in the king's duty to spread *ma'at*, or cosmic order, beyond the state's borders, these documents—generally found in elite contexts—often present foreign contacts as a manifestation of the Egyptian king's international influence.

At Tell el-Daba'a, the technique and iconography of the Minoan-style frescoes from the palace suggest that the artists were thoroughly trained in Aegean craftsmanship; some of them are thought to have come from the Aegean (Negbi 1994: 77; Bietak 1995: 23-25; 1996: 75; 2005: 77-80; 2008; Bietak and Marinatos 1995; 2000: 42-44; Shaw 1995; Merrillees 1998: 152; Warren 2000: 26; Aslanidou 2005: 468; Bietak *et al.* 2007; Brysbaert 2007; cf. Sherratt 1994: 237-39; Knapp 1998: 201; Manning 1998: 319). Even

so, Egyptian and other, culturally diverse painters may have been present as well (Shaw 2009: 473-74; cf. Younger 2009, on some non-Aegean features in the frescoes). Originally assigned to the Second Intermediate Period, the painted building is now dated to the reign of Tuthmosis III, 1479-1425 BC (despite the persistence of arguments for the Second Intermediate Period—see Shaw 2009: 471, 474-75). Regardless of the artists' debated origins, the frescoes certainly testify to the high value in which Egyptian, like Near Eastern, elites held these frescoes as indicators of participation in a prestigious international *koiné* (Feldman 2008; Shaw 2009: 475-76).

Also suggesting a royal interest in demonstrating connections with the Aegean are Queen Ahhotep's title of *nb.t*, or 'lady,' of a region called the *ḥ3.w-nb.wt*, a possible reference to the Aegean islands or Mediterranean littoral (Bietak 1996: 80; Vandersleyen 1971: 139-74; Darnell 1991: 121-23; 1992: 74-75); in her tomb were an axe and dagger displaying Aegean influences (Kantor 1947: 63-66, 71-72; Lacovara 2008). Amenhotep III also prominently displayed his activity in the Aegean: a statue base at his Kom el-Hetan mortuary temple names fourteen sites widely acknowledged to be in the Aegean, possibly the itinerary of an official voyage (Edel 1966; 1988; Cline 1987; 1994: 38; Wachsmann 1987: 95-97; Banou 2000); his palace and ceremonial complex at Malqata incorporated Minoanizing decoration (Stevenson Smith 1998: 163-64, fig. 285; Kemp 2000; Nicolakaki-Kentrou 2000; Bietak 2005: 80).

Particularly informative on Egyptian attitudes towards Minoan imports are the wall paintings on the tombs of certain 18th-dynasty court officials at Thebes, depicting 'Keftiu-people' with Aegean-style clothes and features (Wachsmann 1987: 41-48; Rehak 1998: 40; Graff 2008). Here I adopt the usual reading of the word 'Keftiu' as a reference to Crete (cf. Sherratt and Sherratt 1998: 339 for another opinion), as opposed to Cyprus (Strange 1980) or

the Nile Delta (Duhoux 2003: 268), but equally I accept the caveat that some members of a crew perceived by Egyptians as culturally Minoanized might potentially have been born elsewhere in the Aegean. Although it is unclear whether members of the royal court commonly *owned* Minoan pottery (see above), their tombs' pictorial depictions of Minoan goods may at least indicate how highly these wealthy officials *valued* Minoan pottery in relation to other imports.

The paintings often show 'Keftiu-people' carrying metal vessels, among other goods (Vercoutter 1956; Schachermeyr 1964: 112-15; Wachsmann 1987: 49-77; Matthäus 1995; Koehl 2006: 246-53). The Keftiu appear with other groups of foreigners bringing goods to the Egyptian king, and scholars generally interpret these scenes as depictions of tribute-bearers (Hallmann 2006), implying a fictitious, propagandistic portrayal of the Egyptian king as ruler of all these lands. These scenes, however, are more likely to depict ambassadors bringing presents on the occasion of a royal ceremony, perhaps the *ḥb-sd* festival (Aldred 1969; Koehl 2006: 344-45; cf. Hallmann 2006: 288), making the objects diplomatic gifts rather than tokens of subjugation. Koehl (2006: 344) accordingly describes as misleading the accompanying hieroglyphic texts calling the imports *in.w*, a word often translated as 'tribute'. Yet the literal meaning of *in.w*—a passive participle derived from *in*, 'bring'—is simply 'that which is brought,' and Egyptians used the term in a variety of contexts besides that of 'tribute' (Warburton 1997: 221-36; cf. Bleiberg 1996, though his association of *in.w* with the king's 'privy purse' is also overly limited). A more accurate translation would simply be 'income'.

Nonetheless, by showing the king receiving gifts from the four quarters of the world, the tomb paintings certainly offer an ideologically-driven presentation of Egypt's international position. To an Egyptian audience, these images—like the other royal allusions to activities in the Aegean—would have suggested the king's

traditional role as *Ḥr swsh tšš=f*, 'Horus who extends his boundary' (see, e.g., *Hymns to Sesostri III*, II.10; Griffith 1898: 1-3, pls. 1-3; Möller 1909: pls. 4-5; Sethe 1928: 65-67; for further references, see Simpson 2003: 580) by expanding the limits of *ma'at* beyond Egypt. Imported goods might thus serve as tokens of the king's fulfillment of this role.

Pottery, however, is completely absent from these tomb paintings, which show the Keftiu carrying metal vessels and other goods such as textiles (Warren 1995: 9; Barber 1991; 1998: 14; Tzakili 2000). The accuracy of these depictions confirms the Egyptian artists' close familiarity with Minoan imports, just as the metal vessels' shapes correspond strongly to known Minoan vessel types (Matthäus 1995; Koehl 2006: 246-53). The omission of clay pots from these paintings suggests that the tombs' wealthy owners viewed ceramic imports as less valuable than other, more highly desired imported goods. The absence of painted representations of Minoan pottery may not be total, if a poorly preserved plaster fragment from Malqata does indeed depict a clay rhyton (Nicolakaki-Kentrou 2000: 48; another possible pottery depiction [Lilyquist 1997] probably does not show a Minoan vessel), but metal vessels unquestionably dominate Egyptian depictions of Minoan goods.

These 18th-dynasty officials may not have deemed pottery worthy of inclusion in paintings of Aegean goods, but later in the New Kingdom a different type of Aegean pottery warranted depiction in the tomb of the king himself. Ramesses III (1184-1153 BC) depicted Mycenaean vessels, both in his tomb and possibly also in his Medinet Habu temple (Vercoutter 1956: 309-10, 354, pls. XXXVI nos. 239-40, LIX nos. 438-41; 1997: fig. 3). Egyptian-Mycenaean trade, however, differed significantly from Egyptian-Minoan trade. The Keftiu-paintings may depict diplomatic gifts of luxury goods, but the much greater number and more-standardized forms of imported Mycenaean vessels

suggest more regularized, commercialized trade (Merrillees and Winter 1972: 122, 125; Hankey and Leonard 1998: 33; Koehl 2008a: 271). Therefore, one should not conflate Egyptians' attitudes towards Mycenaean pottery with their earlier attitudes towards Minoan pottery.

After the 18th dynasty, Egyptian references to Minoans—like Minoan imports in Egypt—disappeared. Following the possible conquest of Crete, Mycenaean imports largely replaced Minoan imports in Egypt. Moreover, from LM/LH IIIB onward, Egyptian imports in the Aegean appear primarily at mainland Greek sites, not on Crete (Cline 1994: 36). After this point, vessels in Egypt are seldom identifiable as clearly Minoan rather than Mycenaean (Merrillees and Winter 1972: 115; Merrillees 1972: 285; for contestable sherds, see Hankey 1997: nos. 23-26, although fabric analysis identifies at least one as Mycenaean). To avoid confusing Egyptian-Minoan and Egyptian-Mycenaean trade, this study sets aside such pottery of potentially Mycenaean origin.

Regarding Minoan-Egyptian contacts, the Keftiu-paintings support Sherratt and Sherratt's (1998: 341) characterization of pottery exchange as an 'incidental and informal' sideline, secondary to more highly-valued goods. Furthermore, as Merrillees (2003: 138-39) states, most of these vases in Egypt were 'discarded within a time frame not too far removed from the dates of their importation and manufacture,' suggesting that the owners had little interest in conserving them as heirlooms. But even if the tomb paintings ignore Minoan pottery, many Egyptians clearly owned these vessels. What, then, was their appeal to Egyptian consumers?

First, the word 'consumer' may require some explanation. As Tartaron (2005) argues, the opposition of substantivist versus formalist understandings of ancient economies presents a false dichotomy, obscuring the complexity of Bronze Age exchange. Scholars sometimes still portray Egypt as a purely redistributive com-

mand economy (Bleiberg 1996: 1-28), but the reality was more nuanced. Peasants and craftsmen bartered goods in local markets from the Old Kingdom onward (Janssen 1975; Eyre 1987: 31-32; 1999: 53-54; Kemp 1991: 248-59), and Warburton (1997) argues persuasively for some production for the market in the New Kingdom (*contra* Janssen 1975: 558-62). Although much remains unknown about local village economies, it is reasonable to expect that traders offering Minoan vessels—or potters producing imitations thereof—would have wanted to consider consumers' preferences when attempting to exchange goods.

Forms and Possible Uses of the Vessels

Some argue that Egyptians desired Minoan pottery not for its inherent value, but for something contained in the vessels, such as precious oils (e.g. Merrillees and Winter 1972: 109-10, 115; Warren 1995: 12). Yet no Minoan pottery from Egypt has been shown to have contained a material necessarily placed in it at the time of export rather than during its use in Egypt. Merrillees and Winter (1972: 107; see also Knapp 1991: 26) see the oleaginous substance in one intact LM vessel, the so-called 'Abbott jug' (Table 3, row 11), as potentially Minoan; but, as they recognize, an Egyptian could equally well have put this substance in the vessel (Merrillees and Winter 1972: 107). Oil was a common Mycenaean export, but the Mycenaean transported it in different, specialized forms, such as stirrup jars (Merrillees and Winter 1972: 116-18, 122; Knapp 1991: 29; Bevan 2007: 37), and Minoan exports were not necessarily identical to Mycenaean.

Furthermore, the assemblage of Minoan pottery from Egypt includes many open forms such as cups (e.g., Figure 1), lacking utility as transport containers (Warren 1995: 12; Fitton *et al.* 1998: 131; Carinci 2000: 36; Koehl 2000: 97; Warren 2000: 25; Booth 2005: 54; Bevan 2007: 35). Even in the case of closed forms, sur-

prisingly few Egyptian texts refer to specialized Cretan substances that these vessels might have contained. The only mention of possible vessel contents from Crete is an 18th-dynasty medical reference to the laxative properties of 'Keftiu beans' (Vercoutter 1956: 39-40; Strange 1980: 93-94; Merrillees 1972: 285; Cline 1994: 109). While Minoans certainly may have exported beans (laxative or otherwise) to Egypt, they probably did not use elaborate Kamares ware; fragile, baroque-looking vessels like the Qubbet el-Hawa vase (Table 2, row 7; Figure 4) are clearly not designed for bulk transport. The LM vases from Egypt are similarly fine, highly decorated vessels; and although some might conceivably have contained luxury oils, it is highly unlikely that they held staple foods. Texts suggest Minoan bulk goods reached Ugarit and Mari (Knapp 1991: 37-38, 42; Hood 2000: 23; Warren 2000: 25, 27), and Merrillees (1998: 152) identifies an organic substance in a *stone* vessel in Tuthmosis IV's tomb as possibly Minoan. Most bulk-shipment pottery, however, was more utilitarian, like the resin-filled Canaanite amphorae from the Uluburun shipwreck (Haldane 1993: 352-53; Bass 1997: 163-64).

Egyptian Imitations of Minoan Pottery, and the Question of Ceramic 'Style'

Egyptian-made vessels imitating Minoan shapes or decoration provide important clues to the Egyptian valuation of Minoan pottery. The local imitation of Minoan stylistic traits suggests Egyptians were at least as interested in the vessels' form and decoration as in any putative contents (Fitton *et al.* 1998: 131; Carinci 2000: 36; Walberg 1988; 2001: 17). Imitations of Minoan wares occur throughout the Middle Bronze Age (Table 2), and a stirrup jar from Sidmant tomb 59 probably incorporates LM/LH IIIB influences (Kemp and Merrillees 1980: 246; cf. Merrillees and Winter 1972: 109-10).

Might the imitations indicate not a desire to duplicate Minoan vases' beauty but an ancient

version of brand-name infringement? If, theoretically, some LM closed-form pots did contain high quality oil, might an Egyptian oil-producer place his wares in Minoanizing vessels to make people think his oil came from Crete? Problematic for this theory, however, is the fact that Egyptian 'Minoanizing' vessels often do not look much like real Minoan pottery at all. Some reproduce the painted decoration, but have completely different forms; others mimic the form, but ignore the characteristic decoration (see below). That is, these imitations would not fool anyone who had seen the real thing, i.e. Minoan vases. The potters were not trying to trick people, but rather to invoke the concept of Minoan craftsmanship in an almost hieroglyphic sense.

Egyptian consumers' interest, therefore, seems to have lain primarily in the stylistic qualities of Minoan pottery: they sought to display and replicate Minoan *style* as such. In 1962, Meyer Schapiro (1994: 51) could write that 'For the archaeologist, style is exemplified in a motif or pattern'; but for pottery specialists today stylistic analysis lies not only in the application of chronological and cultural labels to a pot's external decoration, nor only in the iconographic study of painted motifs (see, e.g., Panofsky 1955: 31). Rather, 'style' represents the sum total of all the choices potters make at every stage of manufacture, including the unconscious physical actions involved in production (Chilton 1998; Dietler and Herbich 1989; Lechtman 1977; Lemonnier 1986; Mahias 1993; Sackett 1990).

When Egyptian potters imitated Minoan wares, however, they concentrated on decorative elements such as polychrome painting (Figures 2-4) and ornamental rim shapes (Figure 1). These features of Minoan pottery have little to do with the pots' functional utility, fitting instead Sackett's (1990: 34) definition of 'adjunct', or decorative and non-functional, style. Egyptian potters might imitate Minoan adjunct style, but in other respects, their manufacturing techniques—for example, clay preparation and

tempering methods—were typically Egyptian, not Minoan.

The specific nature of the potter's allusion to Minoan ceramic styles, furthermore, varies from case to case. Some Egyptian potters used Minoan forms without Minoanizing painted decoration, while others used Minoanizing polychrome decoration on Egyptian vessel forms. Two bowls from el-Haraga reproduce the crinkled rims of Kamares ware but not the painted decoration (Table 2, row 3), and four vessels from Tell el-Daba'a imitate the shape of conical rhyta, but their red-slipped surface decoration is purely Egyptian (Table 3, row 8; cf. Koehl 2006: 47-50 on the painted decoration of Minoan rhyta of this type). On the other hand, the Buhen vase has a Middle Kingdom Egyptian form but Middle Minoan-style painted decoration (Table 2, row 8); and from Kahun, five locally-made pieces imitate only the polychrome decoration of Kamares ware, while four pots of Egyptian fabric incorporate both the painted decoration and the shape of Minoan vessels (Figure 1; Table 2, row 1). Egyptian potters did not consistently strive, then, to reproduce one invariable type of form or decoration. More broadly, these potters sought to incorporate something that either decoration or form could suggest: a general sense of Minoan stylistic influence.

Egyptians also expressed interest in Aegeanizing styles by adopting Minoan design elements in other media. From the 12th dynasty on, Egyptian art saw a sudden increase of Minoanizing spiralform motifs (Kantor 1947: 21-30, 56-61; Stevenson Smith 1965: 31). Such decorations appear on scarabs and on Middle Kingdom tombs and tomb chapels at Meir, Qaw el-Kebir, Beni Hasan, and Asyut (Stevenson Smith 1965: 131-32, 135; Morgan 1995: 44; Warren 1995: 2; Barber 1998: 14; M. Shaw 2000: 61; 2009: 476). Additionally, the spiral-decorated kilt of a faience figurine from a Middle Kingdom tomb at Lisht recalls the kilts in Keftiu-paintings (Riefstahl 1972: 140). Ward (1971: 109-16) is

correct that not every spiral in Egypt is Minoanizing, but one can distinguish Minoanizing spiralform designs by focusing on specific motifs that have well-established Aegean precedents, that appear suddenly in Egypt in the early Middle Kingdom, and that are sufficiently complicated so that their appearance is not likely to represent independent invention (Ward 1971: 122; Crowley 1989: 105-12; Quirke and Fitton 1997; Caubet 1998: 109-10; Barber 1998; Laffineur 1998: 53-54). The S, C, Quadruple, and Running spirals are often held up as examples of such motifs (for definitions, see Kantor 1947: 21-30, 56-61; Crowley 1989: 106), although some caution is appropriate for the S-spiral and Quadruple spiral, which appear also in Early Bronze Age Mesopotamia and Anatolia (Maxwell-Hyslop 1971: 35; 1989; Frangipane 1993: 45). Running spirals appear later in early Iron Age Anatolia, but probably derive from Aegean antecedents (Sams 1994: 132; Frankfort 1996: 395).

This Egyptian interest in Minoanizing stylistic and decorative motifs persisted into the early 18th dynasty, as the Tell el-Daba'a frescoes would seem to demonstrate. Aegeanizing decorative motifs continued to appear in tombs, private chapels (Stevenson Smith 1965: 135, 156; Barber 1991: 311-48; Barber 1998: 14-15; M. Shaw 2000: 61; Bietak 2005: 80-81), and even in the Malqata palace and ceremonial complex of Amenhotep III (Stevenson Smith 1998: 163-64, fig. 285; Kemp 2000; Nicolakaki-Kentrou 2000; Bietak 2005: 80).

The use of these exoticizing motifs belongs within a broader context of contemporary eastern Mediterranean artistic and cultural hybridity. By the latter half of the second millennium (roughly contemporary with the Minoan and Minoanizing pottery of Table 3), elite material culture in Egypt, the Near East, and the Aegean shared so many artistic and technological features that it is often described as an international *koiné* (Kantor 1947; Stevenson Smith 1965;

Crowley 1998: 176-77; Feldman 2006), affecting not only pictorial art but also fields as diverse as architecture, metallurgy, musical instruments, and pottery (Caubet 1998: 106-107). This hybridized material culture also had ideological elements; throughout the Late Bronze Age eastern Mediterranean, the ruling elites of the so-called 'great powers' club were conscious of sharing certain values and common interests and saw themselves as part of an overarching international society (Ragionieri 2000; Feldman 2006).

In the Late Bronze Age, then, Egyptians' consumption of Minoan and Minoanizing pottery comprised only one aspect of their participation in this international milieu. Early 18th-dynasty Egyptian art evinces intense interest not only in the Aegean, but in foreign lands in general. Examples of this exoticism, as Rehak (1998: 48) notes, include the representations of foreign plants in Tuthmosis III's *zḥ-mn.w* chapel at Karnak (Beaux 1990) and Hatshepsut's depictions of the land of Punt (including its steatopygous queen) at Deir el-Bahri (Beaux 1990: 296; Roth 2005: 149; Roehrig 2005). Carved wooden toiletry boxes with Aegeanizing or 'International Style' imagery also appear in a number of Egyptian officials' tombs, including one at 18th-dynasty Kahun (Kantor 1947: 84; Morgan 1995: 40). These boxes demonstrate some penetration of exoticizing imagery into the private sphere, even if that private sphere was still a wealthy one (Feldman 2006: 140-41).

The Late Bronze Age *koiné* is generally considered an elite phenomenon. As Caubet (1998: 105) notes, the emergence of a common international artistic culture often depends upon the existence of affluent individuals in each society who wish to display their privileged status. A cross-cultural comparison comes from Early Classic Mixtequilla potters, who imitated foreign centers' styles to participate in an elite *koiné* associated with international trade (Stark 1999). In the Late Bronze Age Mediterranean, objects displaying the so-called 'International Style' are

primarily luxury goods (Feldman 2006: 10-13, 62-63). In Egypt, however, the existence of ceramic imports whose distribution was not restricted only to the highest echelons of society may imply the possibility of broader participation in this cultural *koiné*.

During the Late Bronze Age, then, Egyptians may have valued Minoan ceramic imports not only because they were specifically Minoan, but also, more generally, because they came from this international sphere. The use of foreign objects and design motifs would have given private individuals a way to participate in this far-ranging *koiné*, demonstrating their sophistication and cosmopolitanism. Displays of exotic goods may have conveyed the message that one was a worldly, cultured individual accustomed to participating in an international milieu; with their elaborately painted, visually striking appearance, Minoan vessels would have been among the most conspicuously exotic-looking Mediterranean pottery available.

Indeed, both Middle and Late Minoan pottery in Egypt frequently appears in more broadly internationalizing settings. Syro-Palestinian pottery, in particular, often co-occurs with Aegean wares at Egyptian sites (Kemp and Merrillees 1980: 244). Sites producing Syro-Palestinian and/or Cypriot, as well as Minoan or Minoanizing pottery include the el-Haraga cemetery (Merrillees 1974: 59), Kahun (Stevenson Smith 1965: 133; Kemp and Merrillees 1980: 98), 'Ez-bet Rushdi (Bagh 1998; Czerny 1998: 45-46), Tell el-Daba'a (Karageorghis 1995; Maguire 1995; Bietak 1997: 97-104; Hein 1998; Bietak and Marinatos 2000: 40; Bietak *et al.* 2007: 17), and Kom Rabia'a (Bourriau and Eriksson 1997: 107). In addition, some Minoanizing vessels, including a MM III-influenced jug from el-Lisht and a LM IA-influenced amphoriskos from Tell el-Daba'a, actually incorporate elements from several different artistic traditions (see references in Table 2, row 5, and Table 3, row 8), suggesting that the artists were blending different cul-

tural influences to create a cosmopolitan, international effect.

The 18th-dynasty tomb paintings, too, sometimes show Keftiu-people carrying Syrian vessels or depict Syrians or Levantine people carrying Aegean vessels (Rehak 1998: 46-47; Hallmann 2006: Taf. 1, Dok. 4). Certain images even depict people with a combination of Syrian and Cretan features, whom Darnell (1991: 122; Graff 2008) identifies as 'northern, coastal Syrians showing Keftiuan and Hittite influences' or 'Syro-Keftiuan hybrids.' Minoan pottery was popular in the Levant, first appearing there earlier than in Egypt (Merrillees 2003; Koehl 2008b; Walberg 1983: 144-46) and boasting a different range of forms (Cadogan 1983: 514; Merrillees 2003), but seemingly serving, similarly, as a 'relatively inexpensive yet exotic' addition to domestic pottery assemblages (Koehl 2008b: 59; Merrillees 2003: 139).

In early New Kingdom Egypt, then, people may have alluded to familiarity with foreign lands not necessarily to imply an esoteric knowledge of supernatural or sacred realms (Helms 1988; 1993), but rather to demonstrate their participation in a shared elite *koiné* associated with international trade (similarly Stark 1999). The Kamares imports of the Middle Kingdom, however, predate the 'great powers club', the 'International Style,' and many of the Late Bronze Age's shared motifs and technologies. Yet Egyptian interest in these exotic objects appears already to have been widespread; even in the Middle Kingdom, Minoan/Minoanizing vessels appeared at sites from the Delta to Nubia (Table 2), and Minoan spiral-form designs were popular. Even before the Late Bronze Age *koiné* blossomed, some of its cultural foundations may already have been laid, as Egyptians were already acquiring goods to showcase their cosmopolitanism and awareness of foreign lands. Shaw (2009: 476) has made similar observations on Minoanizing ceiling designs.

Yet another factor in the Egyptians' interest

in exotic goods, during all periods of Minoan-Egyptian trade, would have been the ideology that presented imports as confirmation of the king's influence in foreign lands. As discussed above, the most detailed iconographic and textual sources on Minoan imports in Egypt—the Keftiu-paintings, with their accompanying inscriptions—present the objects through the frame of this royal ideology. Foreign pottery was more widely accessible than elaborate tomb paintings of foreigners bringing gifts, but to an Egyptian who believed in the king's duty to *swsh t3s=f*, or 'extend his boundary,' an exotic vessel would still appear to be tangible evidence of the king's efforts to spread *ma'at* into foreign realms.

Conclusion

In Egypt, Kamares ware and Late Minoan fine wares show up in a wide range of contexts and seem to have been accessible to a broad section of the population. While many of the people who owned this pottery appear to have been fairly comfortable and by no means poverty-stricken—lower elites perhaps, rather than indigents—there is little indication that these vessels were restricted to any exclusive social group, and they certainly reached an audience much wider than the small number of court officials who could construct great tombs with Keftiu-paintings. Furthermore, the finds of such pottery in settlement debris, as well as in private graves, suggest that Egyptian consumers often employed these vessels as objects of daily use: domestic tools or knick-knacks, even if their foreign origins imparted to them an exotic cachet.

Nonetheless, imported pottery may have given individuals a way to display their cosmopolitanism and interest in the international sphere. Certain imported goods, such as metal vessels and textiles—the glittering luxuries of the Keftiu-paintings—might have been available only to the very wealthy. People from a broader swath of Egyptian society, however, could acquire Minoan and Minoanizing pottery. As a result,

these exotic-looking vessels enabled would-be social climbers in a variety of socioeconomic groups to participate in the socially prestigious international sphere and thus to forge their own identities as worldly, cultured, cosmopolitan individuals. In this way, material culture really was 'not only a passive reflection of social reality' (van Wijngaarden 1999: 2), but also an active creator of such reality.

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