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HOW MANY SEALS MAKE A HEAP: SEALS AND INTERCONNECTIONS ON PREPALATIAL CRETE

Epicharmus, we are told, invented the “fallacy of the sorites” of later logicians, so called from the use of a heap of corn (*sorós*) as its favourite illustration - and it posed the question: How many grains of corn must be taken away before a heap of corn will cease to be a heap? What if that number less one be taken away? and so on.¹ In this paper, I would like to turn this Epicharmian heap on its head, so to speak, and ask instead: How many grains of corn must be *added* before a heap of corn will start to be a ‘heap’? But, instead of corn, I’m going to add seals.

The question then is: How many seals must be put together to make the case that there was close and continuous interchange between Minoan Crete and Egypt in the late prepalatial period and into the time of the early palaces? I do not intend to build a quantifiable heap of seals. I think that glyptic art can tell us much more than a mere number, whether of ostrich eggs or imported hippopotamus tusks,² and more, too, than a simple comparison of seal shapes or motifs, though those too must be added to the heap, of course.³ Instead, I would like to take advantage of the richer kind of information that seals can reveal.⁴ It is, as Joan Aruz has argued, a visual record that opens our eyes to the complexities of cultural interaction that might otherwise hardly be noticed in the archaeological record. I would therefore like to explore three sets of prepalatial and early palatial seals, each of which shows a different degree of Egyptian influence,⁵ each with a different message - and each, I hope, will throw some new light on what was happening on Crete in the crucial years leading up to the establishment of the first palaces.

The first group seems blindingly obvious, but important nonetheless - scarabs and the closely related forms of scaraboids and half-ovoids. Perhaps not all the questions connected with these Egyptian and Egyptianizing seals are equally obvious. Scarabs (or, more accurately at this date, scarab-amulets) began to be exported from Egypt in the 11th and early 12th Dynasties;⁶ it seems that some of them did reach Crete no later than a time equivalent to the mid-12th

1 W.PICKARD-CAMBRIDGE, *Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy* (1962²) 250-251.

2 O. KRZYSZKOWSKA (“Early Cretan Seals: New Evidence for the use of Bone, Ivory and Boar’s Tusk,” in *CMS Beiheft* 3, 111-126) estimated that perhaps as many as half of the 300 seals published as ivory in *CMS* II.1 were made of imported hippopotamus ivory and the rest of bone or boar’s tusk. She kindly informs me [email 17/01/04] that this excludes ca. 115 ‘white pieces’, not all of which were published in *CMS* II.1 (on white pieces, *infra* n. 8). Cf.: the the prepalatial seals in the Mitsotakis Collection (in *CMS* VIA [1990], autopsied by Krzyszkowska): 48 bone/tusk, 21 hippopotamus ivory, 20 white pieces. While, in theory, all prepalatial hippo-ivory seals could have been carved from a relatively small number of tusks, new evidence from Archanes suggests that tusks were being imported as early as EM IIA (two hippopotamus-ivory seals E 7 + E 8 from Tholos E [D. PANAGIOTOPOULOS, *Das Tholosgrab E von Phourni bei Archanes* (2002)]); continuing into MM IA, one must imagine a fairly steady supply of imported tusks over a very long time.

3 An overview of foreign-influenced shapes and motifs in J. ARUZ, *The Aegean and the Orient in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages: the evidence of stamp and cylinder seals*, diss. IFA, New York University, 1986 = *Marks of Distinction: Seals and Cultural Exchange between the Aegean and the Orient* (ca. 2650-1360 B.C.) (*CMS Beiheft* 7, forthcoming).

4 Shedding light on the intangibles, some as described by A. & S. SHERRATT: “[The Minoans were] not just engaged in material exchanges with the Orient;[they were] absorbing also the language of ostentation and display, in architecture, food and drink, clothing, and bodily appearance and smell.” (“From Luxuries to Commodities: The Nature of Mediterranean Bronze Age Trading Systems,” in *Bronze Age Trade* 354).

5 NB: when I say ‘Egypt’ or ‘Egyptian,’ this is shorthand for having to repeat ‘[from] Egypt or Syria or the Levantine coast.’

6 O. KEEL, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel* (1995) 24.

Dynasty, thus arriving in the MM IA and early IB periods. The most recent study concludes that nine of the early scarabs found on Crete are genuinely Egyptian;⁷ those, and two imported scaraboids, will be the seed corn for our heap - however, we are not going to build our heap on that, but rather on what happens *next*.

For Minoan seal-cutters began imitating Egyptian scarabs, scaraboids and half-ovoids (Pl. CXCIa-d). When they copied these forms, whatever did they have in mind? Archaeologists can rarely even ask - let alone answer - such a question: what long-ago craftsmen might have thought they were doing; - but I think this special case justifies the question, for we see Minoan craftsmen carving what was to them a meaningless form - they had never seen a scarab beetle; and then made their imitations out of a strange material - we still don't know its exact composition - but it imitates the burnt steatite or talc of genuine Egyptian seals: these are our so-called 'white pieces'.⁸

So, at the time right before or right after the establishment of the first palaces, we find Minoan craftsmen imitating (1) the scarab form, (2) the scarabs' material, (3) the white colour of burnt steatite or talc, which is the core colour of most the scarabs that were imported into Crete, and 4) adding a coating on at least some examples of a glaze similar to that of genuine Egyptian scarabs.⁹ We would call this today 'forgery.' They did a very good job of it, too: some imitations were expert enough to have fooled very knowledgeable 20th century scholars.¹⁰ Clearly, Minoan seal-carvers consciously intended to reproduce Egyptian scarabs and related forms. They never made a large number of these seals, but they did go on producing them for a long time, well into the early palatial period, when they were also being made in hard stones.

7 J. PHILLIPS kindly confirms the list of early Egyptian scarabs and scaraboids (which will appear in her forthcoming *Aegyptiaca on the Island of Crete in its Chronological Context: A Critical Review (Contributions to the Chronology in the Eastern Mediterranean 3, Denkschriften der Gesamtkademie, ÖAW)* Vienna. Scarabs: CMS II.1 180 from Lebena, Tomb I (MM IA context); 201 Lebena, Tomb II (EM III-MM IA); 204 Lebena, Tomb IIA (MM IA); 267, 283 Platanos, Tholos B (EM III-MM IB/IIA-B) 395 Archanes, burial building 6 (MM IA, a little MM IB); I. SAKELLARAKIS & E. SAPOUNA-SAKELLARAKIS, *Archanes: Minoan Crete in a New Light* (1997) 357 Fig. 328 lower - burial building 7 (MM IA early); 405 Gournes, house-tomb (MM IA, a little MM IB); 434 Trapeza, near back of cave (LN-MM II). Scaraboids: CMS II.1 95 Agia Triadha tholos A, chamber (EM II-MM IA, or from the later MM IIA-IIIa? use); 238 Marathokephalo, tholos II (EM I-MM IA/B). In addition, two early pieces with no archaeological context: scarab 'from Moires' = Phillips Cat. # 413; scaraboid in Mitsotakis Coll. (Odygytria Tholoi?) = Phillips Cat. # 553.

8 The base material of 11th and 12th Dynasty Egyptian scarabs is most commonly burnt steatite, which results in a composition equivalent to the natural mineral enstatite: KEEL (*supra* n. 6) 147-148. Steatite is a very soft stone (Mohs 1) which, when heated to ca. 850° C, becomes as hard as 6 on the Mohs scale. Non-destructive testing indicates that some Minoan white pieces were made of meerschaum, others of burnt steatite: H. HUGHES-BROCK, "Seals and Beads: their shapes and materials compared," in CMS Beiheft 5, 106; and I. PINI (a), "Eleven Early Cretan Scarabs," in *Crete/Egypt (Studies)* 107-113, n. 9. On 'white pieces,' see I. PINI (b), "Ein Beitrag zur chronologischen Ordnung der frühkretischen Siegel," in *Pepragmena tou Δ' Diethnous Kretologikou Synedriou* (1981) 421-435.

9 That the Minoans were using the same material and manufacturing techniques as the Egyptians argues for their close familiarity with Egyptian artisans - and not for indirect contact via Byblos (where no scarab mfg. is known at this early date): see D. BEN-TOR, "Chronological and Historical Implications of the Early Egyptian scarabs on Crete," in *Fest. Bietak* (forthcoming). On the glazing of Minoan scarabs, J. PHILLIPS, "The Odd Man Out: Minoan Scarabs and Scaraboids," in M. BIETAK & H. CZERNY (eds), *Scarabs of the 2nd Millennium BC from Egypt, Nubia and the Levant: chronological and historical implications, Contributions to the Chronology in the Eastern Mediterranean, Denkschriften der Gesamtkademie, XXXV* (Vienna 2004): "Minoan scarabs, like their Egyptian counterparts, were glazed, although the environmental conditions on Crete have preserved only traces on some scarabs and other seals (as well as the imported scarabs)." Also see PINI (*supra* n. 8-a) 112, and KEEL (*supra* n. 6) 153.

10 A clear distinction between (most) Egyptian and Minoan scarabs was only made in 1987: I. PINI, "Zehn frühkretische Skarabäen," in T. HACKENS-G. MOUCHARTE (eds), *Technologie et analyse des gemmes anciennes. Proceedings of the European Workshop of Ravello, Pact 23* (1989) 99-111. While the backs of the scarab beetles are carved in an almost identical manner, the engraving of the seal designs is different: whereas the Egyptians carved both sides with rectangular, vertical cuts, the Minoans carved the base obliquely, cutting at an angle. Some pieces, however, are still disputed (e.g. CMS II.1 117 and 120 from Ag. Onouphrios, and 332 from Platanos B [= Pl. CXCIa]), whilst at least one (CMS II.1 238 from Marathokephalo) remains an unclaimed orphan. See further PINI (*supra* n. 8-a) 110-111.

To understand more of what was happening, we need to turn the scarabs around to examine the seal devices. Some of the Minoan designs are very close to Egyptian originals (Pl. CXCIIa, CXCIIb), but most do wander away from these models. All are carved, however, in a single recognizable style, belonging to the Border/Leaf Complex - a group of about 170 seals first identified by Paul Yule - produced in workshop(s) active from MM IA until possibly as late as MM IIA.¹¹ Border/Leaf seals are characterized by deeply incised carving and segmental compositions, with a limited range of motifs, some of them Egyptianizing, although many others are not.¹² So, at the same time that Border/Leaf craftsmen were producing Egyptianizing forms, they were also producing many standard Minoan shapes, some of them also as 'white pieces.' There is no reason to think that the seal-cutters who made good Minoan seals were not the same men who also made the careful copies of foreign scarabs, scaraboids and half-ovoids. Why did they do this? The simplest answer, surely, is that there was a demand for them. There must have been some special value attached to these Egyptian forms - they were not mere trinkets or souvenirs, as they are often described. For the craftsmen were reproducing these seals deliberately, for a fairly long time, and quite accurately. In other words, these seals must have carried a very explicit message, which they did not wish to change, and that message cannot be divorced from their foreign origin - whether that was thought to be Egypt proper, or Syria, or the Levantine coast. It seems likely, therefore, that a small group of seal-owners wanted to wear a foreign seal. They may have been part of an elite, of those who carried Border/Leaf seals, but they were also *a-part* from it; and I believe, consciously apart, and for that I would put all of these seals on my now-rising heap.

Many years before the Border/Leaf workshop(s) came into existence - perhaps as early as EM II - a series of animal-shaped seals had begun to appear on Crete: apes, lions, calves, boar, frog, ducks and doves, sometimes with the body of the whole animal, sometimes foreparts or only a head, some singly, some twinned, and some entwined (Pl. CXCIIb-e).¹³ The materials used for these seals was diverse: bone, ivory, white-piece stuff, steatite, and later, well into the early palace period, hard stone of various kinds. Much evidence suggests that this series of animal-shaped seals was not created *ex nihilo*. Some of the animals were not native to Crete (apes and lions, for example), indisputable evidence of contact with the south. From the 6th through the 11th Dynasties, large numbers of Egyptian seal-amulets were carved in the form of animals (Pl. CXCIII), mostly depicting the whole animal, but sometimes foreparts or massive heads; most of them singly, but some were twinned, and others, especially crocodiles, set antithetically, head to tail, in *tête-bêche* position.¹⁴ Apes, lions, and frogs are most common, but there are also recumbent calves and dogs, and, of course, Nilotic animals such as hippopotami and crocodiles that lack any resonance in the Aegean. Even so, the purely Nilotic crocodile may have slipped into Crete: in Egypt they were often arranged in *tête-bêche* pairs,¹⁵ a motif which might have resurfaced on Crete as entwined serpents, thus inspiring a new Minoan series of entwined animals.

11 P. YULE, *Early Cretan Seals: A Study of Chronology* (1980) 209-210, dated to EM III-MM IA(?). Redated by J.G. YOUNGER to MM IA-IIA ("Review of Paul Yule, *Early Cretan Seals*," *Göttingischen Gelehrten Anzeiger* [1988] 197-201, 218).

12 YULE (*supra* n. 11) 210, noted the 'highly pronounced Egyptian influence' on this group; further, 'the motifs of nearly all of the Egyptianizing shapes of this complex, have, at one time or another, been accepted by experts as Egyptian.' Cf. W.A. WARD, *Studies on Scarab Seals I* (1978) Pl. III 57-70, 83-88, 91-92; Pl. IX 235-238, 243; and see PINI (*supra* n. 8-a).

13 Animal-shaped seals, previously dated to EM III-MM IA, may have begun as early as EM II. An EM II entwined-serpent bone seal (I. SAKELLARAKIS, "Χρονολογημένα σύνολα μινωικών σφραγίδων από τις Αρχάνες," in *Pepragmena tou Δ' Diethnous Kretologikou Synedriou* (1981) Fig. 2,5 = A. KARYTINOS, "Seals from Archanes-Phourni," *CMS Beiheft* 6, 123-134; Fig. 2 [EM IIA in PANAGIOTOPOULOS (*supra* n. 2) E5].

14 Recently collected and studied by A.B. WIESE, *Die Anfänge der ägyptischen Stempelsiegel-Amulette* (1996).

15 WIESE (*supra* n. 14) Tafel 55, 1118-1128. The travels of *tête-bêche* illustrate the complexity of early interconnections: the arrangement itself is probably an early importation from Mesopotamia into Egypt (H.G. FISCHER, "Old Kingdom Cylinder Seals for the Lower Classes," *Ancient Egypt in the Metropolitan Museum Journal* [1977] 57 n 18, 58 n 21, citing Frankfurt and others).

Cretan craftsmen were, in fact, much more innovative when they carved the animal-shaped seals than they would be, a little later, when they turned their hand to scarabs. Perhaps because of its earlier entry into Crete, the zoomorphic series was never dominated by a single workshop,¹⁶ so rules - whatever they might have been - were looser or did not apply. The Egyptian ape, for example, finds himself in an unaccustomed place as the handle of a spherical seal (Pl. CXCIIb). There are also some elegant stylistic variations: entwined animals, for example, though they might be based on *tête-bêche* crocodiles, nonetheless developed on Crete in a thoroughly non-Egyptian manner (Pl. CXCIIe). Birds, too, may have been a Minoan innovation: this shape does not appear in the Egyptian corpus of seal-amulets, though it does appear earlier among North-Mesopotamian/North Syrian animal-shaped seals and weights.¹⁷ Possibly the Minoans added birds to the seal-repertoire, yet, even so, the bird-shaped seals were part of the same Egyptianizing series of seals, as can be clearly seen on the Ashmolean sleeping-duck, CS 87, which bears on its base the device of an Egyptianizing horizontal spiral curling into leaves instead of papyrus tips (cf. Pl. CXCIIa), and the owl made of hippopotamus ivory, CS 62, with the device of 'papyrus buds stemming from one scroll.'

So Minoan craftsmen *are* innovating but within a fairly restricted formula. Instead of copying local Minoan fauna (for example, goats and agrimi, or cats) they largely borrowed from a pre-existing range of animal types; types that had specific meanings for the Egyptians.¹⁸

So, the question arises: how did the animal-shaped seals reach Crete? As far as I know, there are no Egyptian seals of this type on the island. Could it have been an independent invention after all? Alas, that cannot be: the apes and lions will not allow it (Pl. CXCIVa-d). For they did not exist in isolation: their place was within a very *specific* series of seals, a series that already existed (except for the birds) as seal-amulets in the earlier and contemporary Egyptian corpus; and this is equally true whether we are speaking of seals carved as whole animals, heads, or foreparts. How then do we solve the puzzle without having any imports?¹⁹ How did Minoan craftsmen come into contact with this type of Egyptian seal-amulet? If the amulets did not come to the craftsmen, did the craftsmen come to the amulets? Can Minoan craftsmen have travelled to the south at such an early date? We can only speculate, but it might have been something as simple as a shipwright whittling copies of what he had seen; this we shall never know. But there is one thing we *do* now know, which may help us understand the dynamics of a borrowing otherwise entirely lost to the archaeological record.

In 1970, William Ward noted that what were then called 'button seals,' belonged to a lower-class Egyptian tradition: only isolated examples had been found in upper-class contexts and none at all in aristocratic burials.²⁰ Since that time, however, a large number of what are now called 'seal-amulets' - and the impressions stamped by such seal-amulets - have been

16 K. SBONIAS (*Frühkretische Siegel* [1995] 264, Table I), noted that the 16 hippopotamus-ivory animal-shaped seals belong to four different stylistic groups.

17 Sleeping-duck weights are first attested in Mesopotamia in the last quarter of the 3rd mill.: P.O. HARPER, J. ARUZ, F. TALLON (eds), *The Royal City of Susa* (1992) 105, 69 (with relevant bibliography). Cf.: sleeping-duck seals = B. BUCHANAN & P.R.S. MOOREY, *Catalogue of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in the Ashmolean Museum, Vol. II: The Prehistoric Stamp Seals* (1984) 179; dove-seal = H.H. VON DER OSTEN, *Altorientalische Siegelsteine der Sammlung Hans Silviu von Aulock* (1957) 28, Fig. 2: 25. Surprisingly, the very Egyptian image of a duck with its head turned back does not appear either in the early corpus of seal-amulets, nor among the early scarabs. The first duck-scarab is from a grave, temp. Amenophis I = 18th Dynasty (KEEL [*supra* n. 6] 68). Yet it may be more than coincidence that two bird-seals in the Ashmolean Museum, the sleeping duck CS 87 and the owl CS 62, mentioned in the text, *infra*, are engraved with Egyptianizing designs.

18 See the discussion by WIESE (*supra* n. 14) 131-153: Die symbolischen Tiere; and again 161-164.

19 The form of such three-dimensional objects could hardly have been transmitted through painted images. Seals made of perishable wood are unlikely ever to have reached Crete, since the number of Egyptian wooden seals is vanishingly small: W. BOOCHS, *Siegel und Siegel in den Alten Ägypten* (1982) 99 and n. 1; more recently, wooden scarabs in Palestine (KEEL [*supra* n. 6] 152), and the use of large wooden cylinders in late OK Balat (L. PANTALACCI, 'L'administration royale et l'administration locale au gouvernement de Balat d'après les empreintes de sceaux,' *CRIPEL* 22, 153-160 [cf. *infra* n. 23]). Nor is cultural osmosis a likely option: ideas are more commonly disseminated by people, and often through face-to-face contacts.

20 W. WARD, 'Egyptian Design Amulets ('Button Seals'),' *JEA* 56 (1970) 65-80.

discovered at Balat, an oasis in the western desert, dated to the very end of the Old Kingdom (Pl. CXCvA).²¹ The social context of the seals and for the use of the seals is most revealing: while some were found in workshop contexts, others, including an ape-shaped seal, came from upper-class burials - and still others from domestic contexts.²² A priest, for example, secured his own property with just such a seal. But what is striking, and entirely new, is that these seal-amulets *also* served an administrative function, being used by high officials within the governor's palace (Pl. CXCvB).²³ Hence, they are not mere trinkets, but were owned and used by people of high rank - though *not* of the highest rank: they are entirely distinct from the seals used by royal officials, some of which did arrive at Balat stamped on packages and post from the Nile Valley. This absolute division between local seal-amulets and royal seals supports another of Ward's comments (p. 79): this is a provincial art, 'popular in localities not close to the political/artistic capitals of Egypt.' Provincial Egypt. Dare we think of the Delta? Was that the kind of place at this early date where Minoans might have come into contact with local officials, or even private people, like that priest at Balat?²⁴ In Egyptian terms, that would have been the right social level. Unfortunately, the Delta before the high Middle Kingdom is virtually terra incognita; perhaps, one day, there will be surprises there as dramatic as those from Tel el Daba - but without more excavation, this must remain speculation. Nonetheless, what is not speculation is the Egyptian inspiration for the series of animal-shaped seals, and for that I shall add them to my fast-growing heap.

At this point in the discussion, one naturally wonders if the craftsmen who copied the scarabs or animal-shaped seals attributed to them anything of their original meaning. Were they or their patrons familiar enough with Egyptian culture to understand the meaning of these symbols? Most scholars would deny any such understanding, making the borrowings virtually arbitrary and without selection. We shall try to advance this discussion some little way by briefly considering our third group, the seals of the Parading Lions/Spiral Complex. This is the first great group of Minoan seals, also identified by Paul Yule,²⁵ dating from Early Minoan III through Middle Minoan IA - that is, in the time leading up to the establishment of the palaces. The group includes about eighty seals, all of which are unmistakably Minoan in style. By far the most common seal shape is the stamp cylinder, typically carved on one end with lions parading in circles along the periphery of the seal, and with spirals or similar motifs on the other end (Pl. CXCvC-f). Nearly all the seals were made of hippopotamus ivory; and the workmanship ranges from good to really superb. No wonder that Gunter Köpcke suggested that they were produced in a central, if not palatial workshop.²⁶ The dates dispute the term 'palatial,' but the seals certainly have the quality and homogeneous feel of a workshop under central control.

21 L.L. GIDDY & D.G. JEFFREYS, "Fouilles à Ayn Asil," *BIFAO* 79 (1979) Pl. XIX; *BIFAO* 80 (1980) 265-266, Pl. LX, LXXIV. These discoveries remind us quite forcibly of how much our Egyptian evidence depends on cemeteries and how little comes from settlement sites, hardly any of which have been investigated.

22 G. SOUKIASSIAN, *Les ateliers de potiers d'Ayn Asil, Balat III* (1990); A. MINAULT-GOUT, *Le Mastaba d'Ima-Pepi, Balat II* (1992) 88, 101-102.

23 L. PANTALACCI, "Fonctionnaires et analphabètes: sur quelques pratiques administratives observées à Balat," *BIFAO* 96 (1996) 359-367. For the various functions of royal cylinders, non-royal cylinder seals, and seal-amulets, see PANTALACCI (*supra* n. 19).

24 The very few seal amulets found in the western Delta (at Kom el-Hisn = Greek Momemphis), and those said to come from the eastern Delta (Bilbeis) probably do not reflect their rarity, but the lack of excavation (WIESE [*supra* n. 14], 28-29). On the widespread OK and MK remains at Kom el-Hisn, see www.ees.ac.uk/deltasurvey/; on towns in the eastern Delta at the very beginning of the MK, consider the Instruction to MeriKaRe: 'The land [the bowmen] had ravaged has been made into nomes, All kinds of large towns [are in it]; on estates and settlements in the western Delta, see B.G. TRIGGER *et al.*, *Ancient Egypt: A Social History* (1983) 110.

25 YULE (*supra* n. 11) 208-209.

26 Pers. comm. Their quality does not mean, however, that the lions are at all true to life: while the carving is often excellent, the craftsmen had little idea of what lions looked like. They are drawn largely in outline, with few or no internal markings and often without indications of facial features. The chest, belly, and rump are indicated by curves, the bellies swelling out in a deep curve and in to a narrow waist; the tail is usually curled and lifted (discussion of style in ARUZ [*supra* n. 3] 185-188). It is the mane that makes the animals clearly lions, not dogs or mere 'quadrupeds.' The popular and new 'contorted' lion pose, with forelegs and

Lions appear as the main motif on an overwhelming 66% of the seals,²⁷ often parading around a subsidiary central element, usually geometric in form, less frequently a scorpion or spider. Besides lions, main motifs include, in descending order of frequency, human figures, scorpions, spiders, or goats.

The question arises: why lions, and equally to the point, whence lions?

I said earlier the apes and lions of the animal-shaped seals were 'indisputable evidence of contact with the south.' I would like to elaborate on this a little further. While it has been suggested that we cannot *prove* that African lions did *not* roam around early Crete,²⁸ unless and until lion bones are found, I cannot accept this as a serious argument. Paul Yule took another tack, arguing that if lions had indeed roamed the Greek *mainland* at this time, there would be little need to explain lions as orientalising.²⁹ True, but they would still be foreign. It would have been no less a foreign import if the image had come from Early Bronze Greece than if it had arrived from Egypt or the Near East. The only change from the Cretan perspective is a change of direction. It must be obvious, however, that there's no evidence whatsoever for any illustrations of lions on the mainland at anything like the relevant time. Whereas, leonine imagery was already ancient and pervasive in the Orient, and especially in Egypt. Whole books have been written on the part played by the lion in the art of ancient Egypt.³⁰ The lion is a many-sided symbol, but it is always associated with power, and often seen as the visible manifestation of gods and goddesses, and as a symbol of the majesty of the king.

This is the symbol that appears again and again on the Parading Lions seals. Under these circumstances, one may assume that the glyptic imagery was neither entirely random nor an entirely personal expression. Seals, besides their other functions, whether as amulets or symbols of wealth, can also convey information about identity or group membership.³¹ As such, they can serve as emblems, identifying the owners' social affiliation, rather like a flag or a coat of arms.³² And thus, specific seals can mark, maintain, and *further* social differentiation. In other words, having different kinds of seals can both reinforce group affiliation among those wearing a certain type, and reinforce the social distance from those who were not wearing that type.

hindlegs facing in opposite directions, is, in fact, a position first used for recumbent dogs carved on stone lids (J. BOARDMAN, *Greek Gems and Finger Rings* [1970] 26). The lion's distinguishing cross-hatched mane is an unnatural convention that appears earlier on some Syrian seals (BUCHANAN & MOOREY [*supra* n. 17] 35, 37, 38); cf. a loop-handled ivory cylinder seal from Byblos (First Urban Installation, EBA: M. DUNAND, *Fouilles de Byblos I*, pl. cxxvi 5182 = *CMS Beiheft* 7, Fig. 151).

27 Compiled from the most recent tally in SBONIAS (*supra* n. 16) 89-97; Table II.

28 I. PINI, "Das Motiv des Löwenüberfalls in der spätminoischen und mykenischen Glyptik," in P. DARQUE & J.-C. POURSAT (eds), *L'iconographie minoenne. Actes de la Table Ronde d'Athènes (21-22 avril 1983)*, BCH Suppl. XI (1985) 156. There is no necessary reason for a Minoan artist actually to have *seen* a live lion in order to depict it. Albrecht Dürer's famous drawing and woodcut of a rhinoceros is a good example of a vivid image of an animal never seen in the flesh: the drawing was done in 1515 from the description and sketches (?) sent him by a friend from Lisbon, where in 1513 a live rhinoceros had been brought from India, a gift from Sultan Muzafar II of Gujarat to King Manuel I of Portugal. Dürer's representation of a rhinoceros with scales and plates and an extra horn behind the head became the classic representation used in Europe for the next 300 years. It was apparently being reproduced in German school books as a representation of the real animal as late as the 1930s, photography and reality having no effect on the popularity of the image! The story (with even an attempted recycling of this royal gift to Pope Leo X in Rome [alas, the rhinoceros was shipwrecked and drowned]) - in T.H. CLARKE, *The Rhinoceros from Dürer to Stubbs, 1515-1799* (1986) 20 ff.

29 P. YULE, "Early and Middle Minoan Foreign Relations: the evidence from seals," *SMEA* 26 (1987) 168.

30 C. DE WIT, *Le rôle et le sens du lion dans l'Égypte ancienne* (1951); U. SCHWEITZER, *Löwe und Sphinx im Alten Ägypten* (1948).

31 M. MARCUS, *Emblems of Identity and Prestige: the seals and sealings from Hasanlu, Iran* (1996) 75-78.

32 Yelena RAKIC, "Glyptic Art and Cultural Identity in Third Millennium BC Greater Mesopotamia," a paper given at a Bryn Mawr Graduate Symposium, October 17-18, 1997 (online at <http://www.brynmawr.edu/Acads/Arch/guesswho/symposium.htm>). I am indebted to her discussion of the emblematic value of seals in 3rd Mill. Mesopotamia.

The earliest Parading Lions seal was discovered by Sinclair Hood, stamped on a jar sealing, in the South Front House at Knossos.³³ The date of the sealing, and thus the chronological anchor for the group, is Knossian Early Minoan III. From Tholos Gamma at Archanes Phourni, two more Parading Lions seals may be dated to the same early period; while others elsewhere in the cemetery are from Middle Minoan IA contexts.³⁴ It seems likely, as Kostas Sbonias concluded, that the major concentrations of Parading Lions seals in the Mesara tholoi are also most likely MM IA in date.³⁵ I need hardly stress that this is the formative time leading up to the First Palaces. If we wish to consider the 'social role of things,' that is the social context in which these seals were made and displayed. And that was, surely, a time of social change and pressures. Recent anthropological study of emblems stresses that it is precisely in periods of instability and competing politics that the use of emblems intensifies.³⁶ Intergroup competition and the need for cooperation to attain political or social goals together create a strong sense of group affiliation. The Parading Lions seals, I suggest, were exactly such emblems, the material markers of a specific social group. Their characteristic style and iconography would have conveyed information about the social affiliation of the seal-owner, and expressed his group identity, as opposed to outsiders who did not wear or carry these seals. I further suggest that the choice of the lion as the premier emblem of this group was not an artistic choice, but a social and political choice.

Why the lion? It is the borrowed symbol of chiefdom, perhaps even of an emergent royalty. In other words, I maintain that the Minoans knowingly chose the symbol and knew its Egyptian meaning. Their choice of subject was intentional, and it had crucial social and political significance. This is not to denigrate the Minoans; they were no passive recipients *ex oriente lux*.³⁷ As John Boardman once wrote, 'the Minoan artist looked at life with sharper wits than his foreign colleagues;' and it was so.³⁸ Their patrons may have consciously chosen the lion as their emblem, to express their growing pretensions, but it was the craftsmen who turned it into something Minoan, and made it their own.

That was their genius, and that made a heap of difference.

Judith WEINGARTEN

33 M.S.F. HOOD & V.E.G. KENNA, "An Early Minoan III sealing from Knossos," in *Antichità Cretesi: Studi in onore di Doro Levi* I, 1973-74, 103-6. Pottery defined as EM III in G. CADOGAN *et. al.* "Early Minoan and Middle Minoan pottery groups at Knossos," *BSA* 88 (1993) 21-8.

34 EM III: SAKELLARAKIS (*supra* n. 13) 520, Fig. 5, 8 (contorted lions); EM III-MMIA(?): see SBONIAS (*supra* n. 16) 98-99 and nn 134, 135; and KARYTINOS (*supra* n. 13) Fig. 3.

35 The concentration of Parading Lions seals at Archanes is excelled only by that found at Platanos A/B, with a third important cluster at Marathokephalo. The workshop thus could have been either in the Mesara (SBONIAS [*supra* n. 16] 97-98) or in the Archanes area. SBONIAS (*idem*) notes that there is some slight evidence for a local stylistic variation at Platanos, where the contorted lion appears more commonly. This variation could point either to a second workshop or a slightly later date.

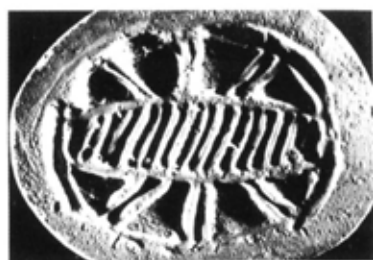
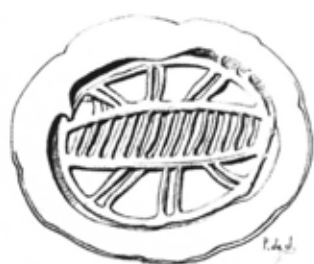
36 D.D. DAVIS, "Hereditary Emblems: Material Culture in the Context of Social Change," *JAnthArch* 4 (1985) 149-76.

37 The Sherratts [*supra* n. 4] 355, seem to me to have struck the right balance: "The easterners had the gold, the skills, the bulk, the sophisticated lifestyle, and the investment capacity. Aegean civilisation was undoubtedly culturally independent ... but its growth can only be understood in the context of its interaction with these larger economic structures."

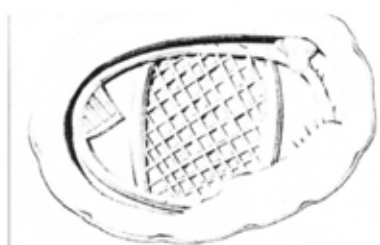
38 BOARDMAN (*supra* n. 26) 20, 24-6. Another Epicharmian illustration puts it very well - this one preserved by Plutarch in his life of Theseus (xxiii): Theseus, he says, repaired his ship with so many new planks that some said it was no longer the same ship.

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- Pl. CXCIa Egyptian or Minoan scarab? (CMS II.1 332) from Platanos Tholos B.
 Pl. CXCIb Minoan scarab (CMS II.1 402) from Gournes house-tomb.
 Pl. CXCIc Minoan scarab (*Crete-Egypt [Catalogue]* 308) from Moni Odijitria, Tholos B.
 Pl. CXCIId Minoan scaraboid (CMS IV 112, Metaxas Coll.).
 Pl. CXCIIf Upper: Minoan ovoid, V.E.G. KENNA, *Cretan Seals. With a Catalogue of the Minoan Gems in the Ashmolean Museum* (1960) No. 88
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 Pl. CXCIId Bottle-seal with twinned apes' (?) heads (CMS II.1 436) from Trapesa Cave.
 Pl. CXCIIf Entwined serpents (?) (CMS II.1 25) from Ayia Triada Tholos A.
 Pl. CXCIIf Typology of animal-shaped Egyptian scarab-amulets (after WIESE [*supra* n. 14] Pl. 15).
 Pl. CXCIIfa Minoan ape-shaped seal, no. 2 (A. XENAKI-SAKELLARIOU, *Les cachets minoens de la collection Giamalakis* [1958] Pl. 1).
 Pl. CXCIIfb Egyptian ape-shaped scarab-amulet (WIESE [*supra* n. 14] Pl. 50, no. 1039).
 Pl. CXCIIfc Minoan lion-shaped seal, CMS II.1 130 from Kalathiana Tholos.
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 Pl. CXCIIfa Ain Asil sealings (upper two rows) after KEEL [*supra* n. 6] Fig. 586 - 590.
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 Pl. CXCIIfc Parading Lions/Spiral Complex seal (CMS II.1 248) from Platanos Tholos A.
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 Pl. CXCIIfe Parading Lions/Spiral Complex seal (CMS II.1 497a) of unknown provenance.
 Pl. CXCIIf Parading Lions/Spiral Complex seal (CMS II.1 3a) from Drakones Tholos Δ.



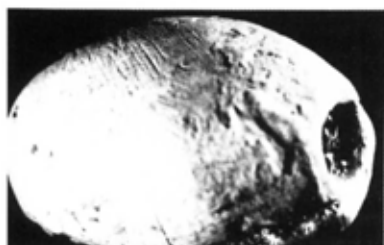
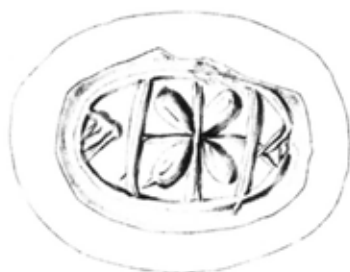
a



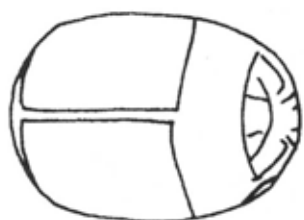
b



c



d

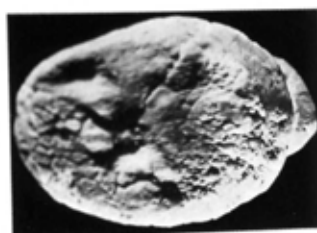


a



b

c



d

e



1a



1b



1c



1d



2



3



4



5a



5b



5c



5d



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6a



6b



7



8



9



10



11



12



13



14



15



16



17a



17b



18

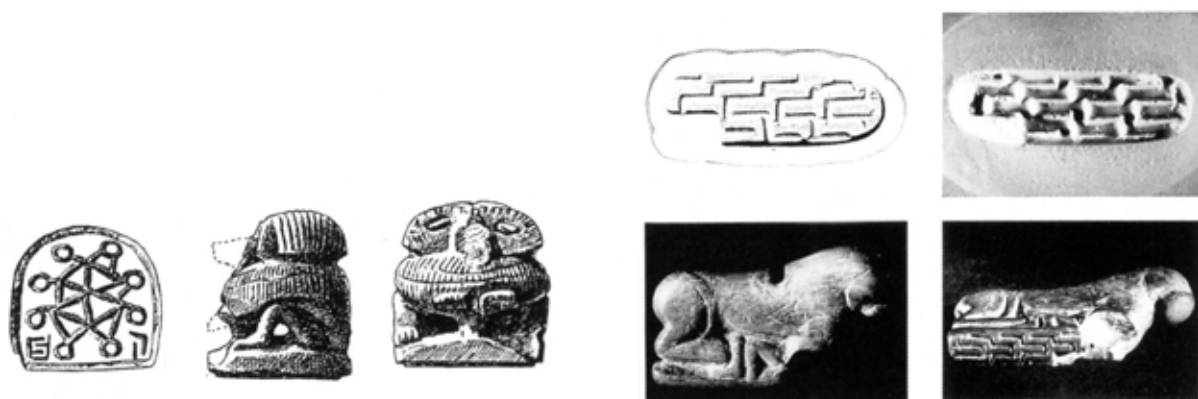


19



Waga papyriformis - vachetis papyriformis

a



b

c



1093

1094

1095



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1097

1098

1099



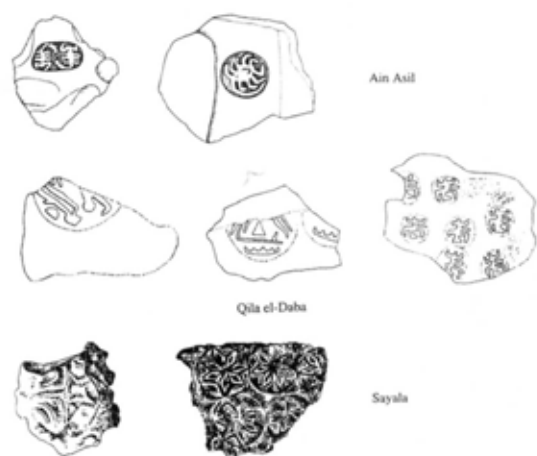
1100

1101

1102

1103

d



a



b



c



d



e



f

