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AN UNPUBLISHED AMENHOTEP III FAIENCE PLAQUE FROM MYCENAE*

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Two fragments of a faience plaque with the cartouche of Amenhotep III, found at Mycenae by Taylour in 1968 and 1969, are demonstrated to be fragments from one of at least six, and possibly as many as nine, Egyptian faience plaques found at this site. Eleven such fragments have been unearthed at Mycenae since 1886, all in probable LH IIIB contexts. Taylour's fragments provide valuable information for a new reconstruction of all the Egyptian faience plaques found at this site. These plaques were originally rectangular, of white faience, blue- or green-glazed, and measured ca. 11 cm in width, 1.5 cm in depth, and between 10 and 20 cm in length. They were identically inscribed "the good god Neb-Ma'at-Re, son of Re, Amenhotep, Ruler of Thebes, given life" (*nṯr nfr Nb-mꜣꜣt-Rꜥ Sꜣ Rꜥ ḏmnhp ḥkꜣ wꜣst di ḥnh*) on both front and back. They belong to the category of large faience plaques used extensively in Egypt primarily in foundation deposits, especially during the late Eighteenth Dynasty. Their function at Mycenae is uncertain. They most likely arrived at Mycenae during the LH IIIA1 period. It has been speculated that they may be related to an official Egyptian embassy, which may be documented on Amenhotep III's 'Aegean' list at Kom el-Hetan in Egypt.

IN 1968, A LARGE FRAGMENT of a faience plaque with the cartouche of Amenhotep III was uncovered within the Cult Center at Mycenae by the Helleno-British excavation team directed by Lord William Taylour (fig. 1; pl. 1). Although a brief mention of this partial plaque appeared in *Antiquity* the following year,¹ neither a detailed description nor photographs were

available until recently.² Nevertheless, this partial plaque has been cited frequently and is recognized as an important artifact for Egypto-Aegean studies.

The fragment (Mycenae Exc. Inv. #68-1000), of white faience, was originally green-glazed. It is 9.75 cm long, 11.20 cm wide, and 1.25-1.55 cm thick. Identical black hieroglyphs face in opposite directions on its front and back (pl. 1:a-b). The top edge and upper portions of the two side edges are intact (pl. 1:c), but the fragment is broken off at the bottom, as indicated by the partial hieroglyphs visible at the extreme bottom edge (pl. 1:d). The preserved inscription reads, on both sides: *nṯr nfr Nb mꜣꜣt-Rꜥ*, with an additional *Sꜣ Rꜥ* just beginning at the bottom of the fragment.³ This may be translated as "the good god Neb-Ma'at-Re, son of Re." 'Neb-Ma'at-Re' is a prenomen virtually unique to Amenhotep III.⁴

* I am indebted to a number of individuals who read earlier drafts of this article or supplied necessary information; space limitations preclude full acknowledgment of each by name, but I remain grateful for their assistance. Particular thanks are owed to E. B. French, V. Hankey, P. A. Kourachanis, D. B. O'Connor, and W. D. Taylour, and to Ephor K. Demakopoulou and Epimeletria E. Palaiologou for their assistance at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens and the Nauplion Museum, respectively. The study was made possible by grants from the Archaeological Institute of America, the Endowment for Biblical Research/American Schools of Oriental Research, and the Institute for Aegean Prehistory. Figures 1, 3, and 4 are by L. A. Turner, Figure 2 by K. Shelton, and the photographs on Plates 1-3 by the author. This study is respectfully dedicated to the memory of Pericles A. Kourachanis, late of the Egyptian Department of the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.

¹ W. D. Taylour, "Mycenae 1968," *Antiquity* 43 (1969): 95-96.

² E. Cline, "Amenhotep III and the Aegean: A Reassessment of Egypto-Aegean Relations in the 14th Century B.C.," *Orientalia* 56 (1987): pl. III #9.

³ It is unclear whether the uppermost line on the plaque should be understood as *pt* (sky/heaven hieroglyph) or merely as a thick border line.

⁴ An obscure king of the Second Intermediate Period, Ramses VI of Dynasty XX, and a king ruling during the Kushite period after the XXVth Dynasty are the only other

The fragment was found in the 'Room with the Fresco' (Room 31) of the Cult Center at Mycenae. It lay in the mouth of a large, crumpled lead vessel, at the east end of the room, just to the north of the altar located at the base of the fresco.⁵ In this same area, a number of ceramic vessels, stéatite spindle whorls, and bronze arrowheads were uncovered. All of these objects, including the plaque, are considered to be part of the floor deposit of Room 31. The completeness of the vessels and the proximity of the materials to the floor suggest that they were part of the furnishings of the room. The vessels, which include a piriform jar, a large decorated amphora, a small globular stirrup jar, a linear piriform amphora, a miniature spouted conical krater, and, in coarse ware, a jug and a tripod cooking pot, date the deposit to the middle of the Late Helladic IIIB period. The room went out of use immediately after this phase (Phase VII of the site's history, as defined by Taylour)⁶ and was deliberately backfilled to a depth of just under a meter.

A second fragment from a faience plaque of Amenhotep III (fig. 2; pl. 2:a-b) came to light during Taylour's excavations in 1969. It, too, was found in Room 31 of the Cult Center, but lay in the northwest corner within Phase VIII, the deliberate backfilling of the room, an event which occurred later in the LH IIIB period.⁷ The fill contained additional objects that probably also originated in the room.

This second fragment (Mycenae Exc. Inv. #69-126), of white faience in poor condition, is 5.0 cm long,

4.0 cm wide, and 1.3 cm thick. The obverse face is completely worn away, so that the core itself is now visible; the reverse face has lost its original glaze (green?) but still bears the remnants of two black vertical lines in the lower right hand corner. These two lines may be identified as an outer border line and an inner cartouche line (see below, fig. 4). The fragment has been known to the excavators since its discovery in 1969, but the assignment to an Amenhotep III plaque was previously uncertain.

Although there is no direct join between Taylour's two fragments, a number of factors indicate that the two probably come from the same original plaque. Particularly significant is the fact that the distance between the left edge and the leftmost vertical line on the smaller fragment corresponds exactly to the same dimensions on the larger fragment (see figs. 1, 2, 4 and pl. 3). Further, the appearance (color and texture) of the inner faience cores, the use of black lines on the faces, and the thickness of Taylour's two fragments all correspond.

The fragments uncovered by Taylour are not unique at Mycenae. A total of eleven such fragments have been found at this site: seven fragments by Tsountas in 1886 and 1890 (NMA #2566.1-5, 2718, 12582),⁸ a partial plaque in two fragments by Mylonas in 1963 (Nauplion Museum #13-887, 13-888),⁹ and the two fragments by Taylour in 1968 and 1969.

The eleven fragments are of various sizes. Several appear to have been discolored by fire and/or corrosion. They all appear to be of white faience, originally blue- or green-glazed, with similar hieroglyphs in black on front and back of each fragment. Together,

Pharaohs to have used this premen. (See J. von Beckerath, *Handbuch der ägyptischen Königsnamen* [Munich, 1984], 79, 85-86, 95, 133; also M. R. Popham, E. A. Catling, and H. W. Catling, "Sellopoulo Tombs 3 and 4, Two Late Minoan Graves near Knossos," *BSA* 69 [1974]: 216-17; W. Helck and E. Otto, *LA I* [Wiesbaden, 1975]: 206-7; K. A. Kitchen, "Appendix I: An Egyptian New Kingdom Scarab from Alalakh," *Levant* 14 [1982]: 88; W. Helck and E. Otto, *LA V* [Wiesbaden, 1984]: 124.) It is unlikely that the plaque could be attributed to anyone other than Amenhotep III, primarily because of the date of the findspot (infra) and the occurrence of other Amenhotep III/Queen Tiye objects at Mycenae (see infra n. 11).

⁵ Taylour (supra n. 1): 95; idem, *Well Built Mycenae I* (Warminster, 1981), 48-49. I am indebted to Mr. A. Moore, who is publishing this area, and to Dr. E. B. French for providing detailed information on the findspot of this fragment.

⁶ Taylour (supra n. 5): 9-10.

⁷ See Taylour (supra n. 5): 51-52 for description of excavated area.

⁸ C. Tsountas, "Ek Mykenon," *Ephemeris Archaeologike* 1891: 18, 23-24, 30, pl. III; Taylour (supra n. 1): 95-96.

Until recently, five of the Tsountas fragments were inventoried and displayed under a collective number NMA #2566. The last digit (.1-.5) was added only in the past few years and may not reflect the actual order of discovery; the seventh fragment (NMA #12582) was only recently rediscovered in the storerooms of the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.

The Tsountas and the Mylonas plaque fragments are on display in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens and the Nauplion Museum respectively. Present comments and conclusions relevant to these fragments are based upon visual observations by the author and prepublication data generously made available by the late P. A. Kourachanis.

⁹ G. E. Mylonas, "Mycenae," *Ergon* 1963: 67, f. 67; idem, "Excavations at Mycenae," *Praktika* 1963: 101, f. 76.

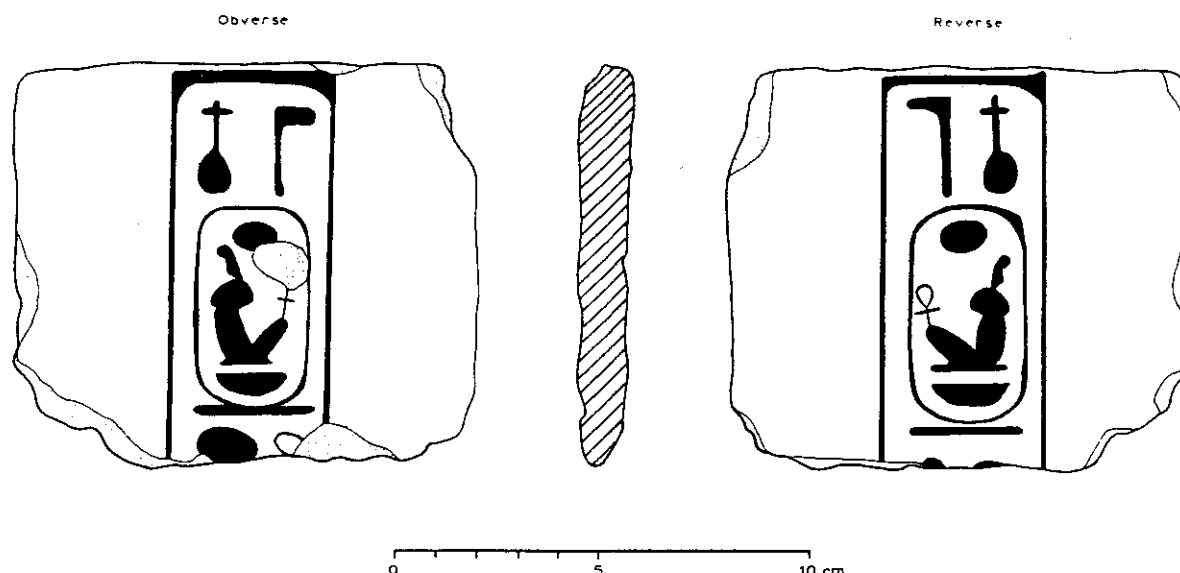


Fig. 1. Large fragment of Amenhotep III faience plaque (#68-1000) from Mycenae; found by Taylour in 1968.

these plaque fragments are unique in the Aegean,¹⁰ and may be the most important of the inscribed Egyptian Pharaonic objects found at Mycenae.¹¹ As noted, Taylour's fragments were in a mid LH IIIB and a later LH IIIB context, respectively, in Room 31 of the Cult Center. Mylonas' partial plaque comes from Room M-3 of Building M, an LH IIIB2 context.¹² At least four of Tsountas' fragments come from an area described only as northeast of the Lion Gate on the Acropolis; Iakovides considers this to be the area lying between Buildings M and N, an LH IIIB context.¹³

¹⁰ The only other Egyptian plaque found in or near the Aegean is a miniature steatite plaque (1/2" long) of Ramses II found at Hala Sultan Tekke on Cyprus; see P. Åström, "Aegyptiaca at Hala Sultan Tekke," *OpAth* XV.2 (1984): 17 (#9), 20 f. 8.

¹¹ Other objects inscribed with a Pharaonic cartouche found at Mycenae include a faience ape of Amenhotep II, a faience vase of Amenhotep III, and two faience scarabs of Queen Tiye (wife of Amenhotep III). See Cline (supra n. 2): 7-9, tables 1 & 3; also idem, "International Trade in the Amarna Period: Egyptian and Near Eastern Imports at LH III Mycenae," in *Tell el Amarna 1887-1987*, ed. G. D. Young and B. J. Beitzel (Winona Lake, Ind., forthcoming).

¹² See supra, n. 9.

¹³ Sp. E. Iakovides, personal communication. See also supra, n. 8. It is not completely clear where Tsountas' other three fragments were found; see Cline (supra n. 11).

During the past decade a few scholars, notably Hankey¹⁴ and Helck,¹⁵ have addressed the problem of an accurate reconstruction of the number of original plaques and their inscriptions. When the current study of Taylour's fragments was undertaken,¹⁶ it became apparent that these fragments may hold the key to analyzing all eleven fragments of Egyptian faience plaques found at Mycenae. They may aid in answering several questions: 1) How many individual Egyptian faience plaques have been found at Mycenae? 2) What is their proper reconstruction? 3) At what date did they arrive at Mycenae? 4) What was their intended function? 5) Why were they imported into Mycenae?

The conclusion reached by previous analyses is that the seven Tsountas fragments come from two separate plaques, and that Taylour's and Mylonas' fragments come from a third and a fourth plaque, all bearing the

¹⁴ V. Hankey, "The Aegean Interest in El-Amarna," *Journal of Mediterranean Anthropology and Archaeology* 1 (1981): 45-46.

¹⁵ W. Helck, *Die Beziehungen Ägyptens und Vorderasiens zur Ägäis bis ins 7. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (Darmstadt, 1979), 96-97.

¹⁶ Through the kind permissions of W. D. Taylour, E. B. French, and V. Hankey, I am also indebted to Dr. French and to the Ephoreia of Nauplion for permission to conduct research within the storerooms of the Helleno-British excavations at Mycenae and for their assistance.

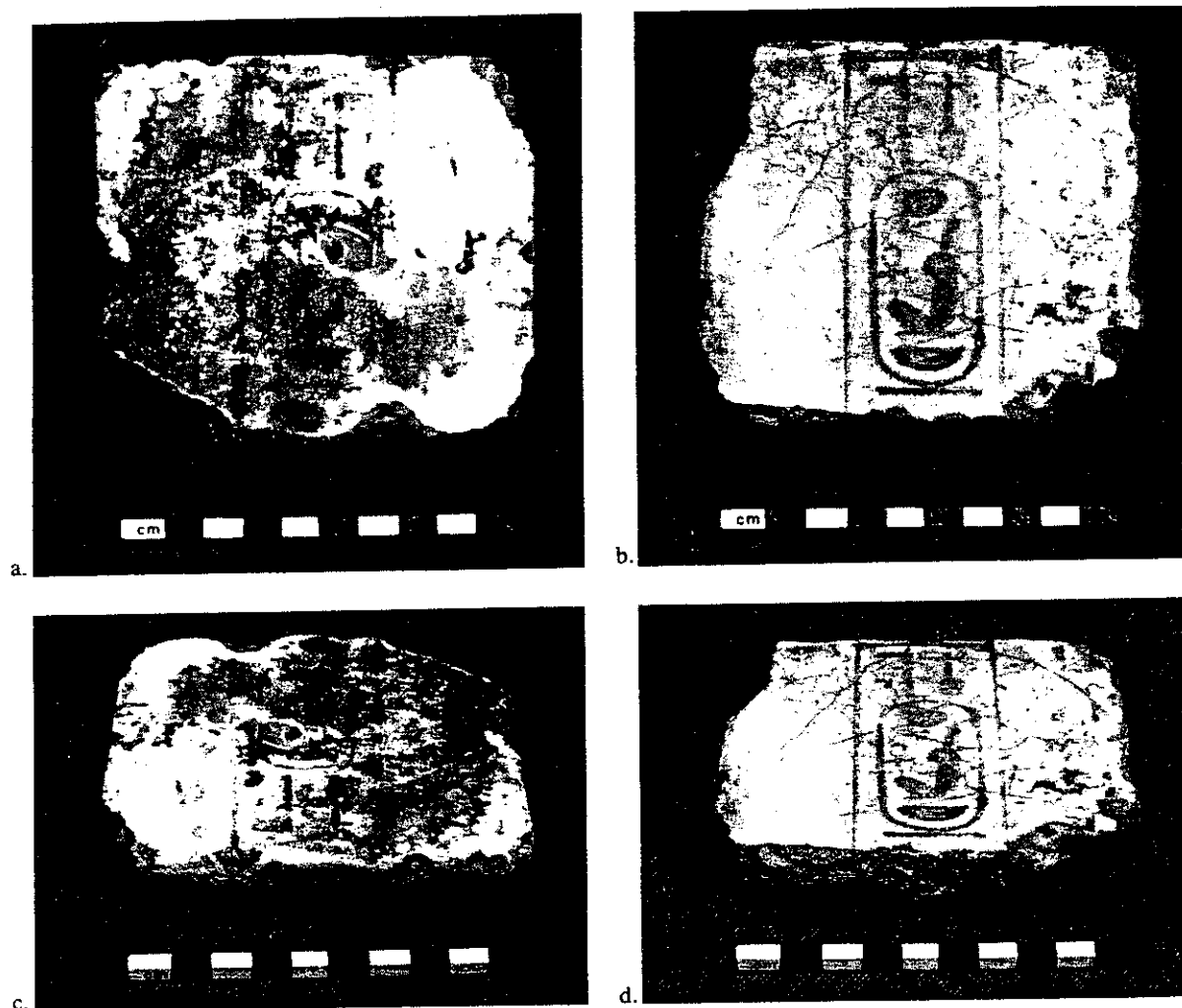


Plate 1. Taylour's large Amenhotep III faience plaque fragment (#68-1000): a. Obverse face; b. Reverse face; c. Top edge; d. Lower edge (broken).

cartouche of Amenhotep III.¹⁷ A re-examination of both the appearances of the eleven fragments and the inscribed hieroglyphs confirms that they were inscribed with the prenomen and nomen of Amenhotep III, but indicates that they derive from at least six, and possibly as many as nine, original plaques.¹⁸ This may be demonstrated as follows.

Mylonas' partial plaque and three of the Tsountas fragments (NMA ##2566.2, 2566.4, 2566.5) all have the hieroglyphs facing the same way on both the obverse

and reverse faces of the fragment. Taylour's larger fragment (#68-1000) and two of the Tsountas fragments (NMA ##2566.1, 2718) have the hieroglyphs facing in opposite directions on either side of the fragment. Thus, these two sets must be from separate groups of plaques.

Of the former group, the three Tsountas fragments all contain the same hieroglyphs. Since no set of hieroglyphs is ever repeated in Amenhotep III's royal titles,¹⁹ the three fragments must be from separate

¹⁷ I.e., Hankey (*supra* n. 14): 45.

¹⁸ I am especially indebted to Professor D. B. O'Connor for his invaluable help during this re-examination.

¹⁹ See Helck and Otto (*supra* n. 4): 206-7; also examples in G. Haeny, *Untersuchungen im Totentempel Amenophis' III.*



Fig. 2. Small fragment of Amenhotep III faience plaque (#69-126) from Mycenae; found by Taylour in 1969.

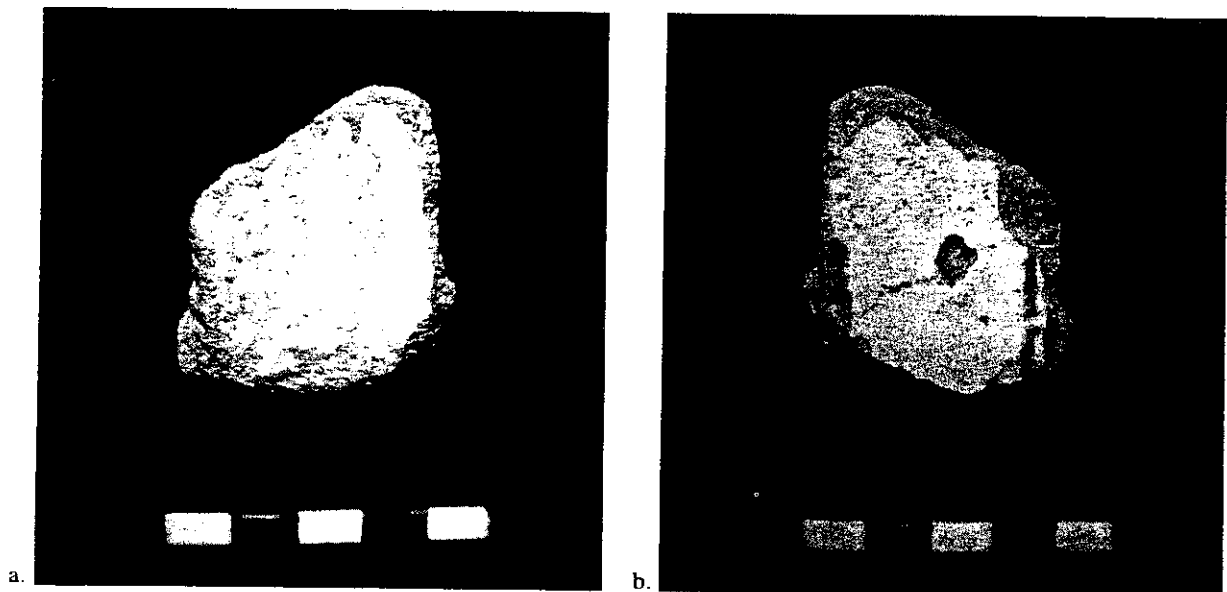


Plate 2. Taylour's small Amenhotep III faience plaque fragment (#69-126): a. Obverse face; b. Reverse face.

plaques. Furthermore, it can be shown that Mylonas' partial plaque is indeed from a completely separate plaque, as the excavator suggested.²⁰ Thus, one may hypothesize that the first group is comprised of four separate plaques.

Beiträge zu ägyptischen Bauforschung und Altertumskunde, Heft 11 (Wiesbaden, 1981): Abb. 7, Taf. 33-35.

²⁰ Points include the glazed top edge and the cruder quality of the hieroglyphs present on Mylonas' partial plaque.

Of the latter group, Taylour's larger fragment contains the same hieroglyphs as one of the Tsountas fragments and also has a hieroglyph in common with the other Tsountas fragment. Thus, there are at least two separate plaques present in the second group.

One can reasonably conclude from this evidence that Taylour's larger fragment, Mylonas' partial plaque, and four of the Tsountas fragments come from six separate plaques. Taylour's smaller fragment (#69-126) most likely comes from the same plaque as his

larger fragment (#68-1000), as stated above. The three remaining Tsountas fragments (NMA #2566.3, 12582, and the second Tsountas fragment from Group Two) cannot be unambiguously reconstructed. They might fit into these six plaques or could be from one to three additional plaques.

Further information is provided by the observation that the plaques were made by at least two craftsmen, to judge not only by the differences in the direction of the hieroglyphs, but also by the differences in the quality of the drawn hieroglyphs—those on Taylour's partial plaque are finely executed, whereas those on Mylonas' partial plaque are quite crude.

Now let us address the question of the size of the plaques. In Egypt, many similar inscribed faience plaques have been found. They were normally between 8 and 14 cm in length, except during the reign of Amenhotep III, when they were often larger, measuring in some cases up to 20 cm in length.²¹

A number of the plaque fragments at Mycenae have retained one or more of their original edges, but in no case does any one fragment have more than three original edges left. It is clear that the plaques were originally about 11 cm wide and 1.5 cm thick, but one cannot determine the original length of the plaques found by Tsountas and Mylonas. There are two possible reconstructions: two separate sets of smaller plaques ca. 10 cm long, or one set of longer plaques ca. 20 cm in length. If their original length was ca. 10 cm, they would fall into two groups: the first, those reading "the good god Neb-Ma'at-Re" (*nṯr nṯr Nb-m3ʿt-Rʿ*) on both front and back; the second, those reading "son of Re, Amenhotep, Ruler of Thebes, given life" (*S3 Rʿ ʾmnḥtp ḥk3 w3st di ʿnh*) on both front and back (Fig. 3).²² If they measured ca. 20 cm, the full inscription would read "the good god Neb-Ma'at-Re, son of Re, Amenhotep, Ruler of Thebes, given life" (*nṯr nṯr Nb-m3ʿt-Rʿ S3 Rʿ ʾmnḥtp ḥk3 w3st di ʿnh*) on both front and back (fig. 4).²³

²¹ J. M. Weinstein, "Foundation Deposits in Ancient Egypt" (Ph.D. diss., Philadelphia, 1973), 127, 141.

²² Parallels from Egypt may be seen in two blue faience plaques of Akhenaten found in foundation deposits under the Triple-temple at Sesebi; each bears the inscription "Amenhotep, God-ruler of Thebes" (*ʾmnḥtp nṯr ḥk3 w3st*). See A. M. Blackman, "A Preliminary Report on the Excavations of Sesebi, Northern Province, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1936-37," *JEA* 23 (1937): 148, pl. 17 #2. The size of the plaques is not described in the report.

²³ Parallels from Egypt for this long inscription are very similar but not identical. Photographs in G. Haeny (supra n. 19: Abb. 7, Taf. 33-35) show long vertical inscriptions of

The hieroglyphs on Taylour's larger fragment that are broken off at the bottom of the piece (*S3 Rʿ*) and the partial line visible underneath the cartouche on Tsountas' fragment NMA #2566.1 indicate that these two at least were from lengthy plaques. The broken hieroglyphs indicate a join between the two groups mentioned above, the *nṯr nṯr Nb-m3ʿt-Rʿ* fragments and the *S3 Rʿ ʾmnḥtp . . .* fragments. Thus, Taylour's plaque and at least one of the Tsountas plaques were approximately 20 cm in length. If all of the plaques were originally the same size, they would have measured ca. 20 × 11 × 1.5 cm, with a full inscription reading "the good god Neb-Ma'at-Re, son of Re, Amenhotep, Ruler of Thebes, given life" (*nṯr nṯr Nb-m3ʿt-Rʿ S3 Rʿ ʾmnḥtp ḥk3 w3st di ʿnh*) on both front and back (fig. 4).²⁴ The reconstruction shown in fig. 4

Amenhotep III on monuments at Kom el-Hetan which contain variations on "the good god, Neb-Ma'at-Re, son of Re, Amenhotep, Ruler of Thebes, given life" (*nṯr nṯr Nb-m3ʿt-Rʿ S3 Rʿ ʾmnḥtp ḥk3 w3st di ʿnh*). W. M. F. Petrie (*Scarabs and Cylinders with Names* [London, 1917], pl. 35 #124) illustrates a stoneware fragment inscribed, in two cartouches side-by-side, "the good god Neb-Ma'at-Re, son of Re, Amenhotep, Ruler of Thebes" (*nṯr nṯr Nb-m3ʿt-Rʿ S3 Rʿ ʾmnḥtp ḥk3 w3st*). P. E. Newberry (*Scarab-Shaped Seals*, Catalogue general du Musée du Caire [London, 1907], 54, pl. IV #36212; see also M. H. Gauthier, *Les Livres des Rois d'Égypte*, v. II [Le Caire, 1912], 325 #LXXX and W. M. F. Petrie, *Historical Scarabs* [London, 1889], pl. 18 #1271, 1274) describes a scarab in the Cairo Museum with an inscription identical to that on the stoneware fragment: reading in two cartouches side-by-side "the good god Neb-Ma'at-Re, son of Re, Amenhotep, Ruler of Thebes" (*nṯr nṯr Nb-m3ʿt-Rʿ S3 Rʿ ʾmnḥtp ḥk3 w3st*). Further, J. Leclant ("Note sur la Plaquette d'Amenophis III," *Syria* 52 [1975]: 20 n. 9) mentions a small "plaquette" in the Cairo Museum, inscribed only on the obverse, in two cartouches side-by-side, "Neb-Ma'at-Re, Amenhotep, Ruler of Thebes" (*Nb-m3ʿt-Rʿ ʾmnḥtp ḥk3 w3st*); he also records (ibid., 19-21) a "plaquette" (1.7 cm × 1.1 cm) found at Mari in Syria, inscribed "Neb-Ma'at-Re" (*Nb-m3ʿt-Rʿ*) on the obverse face and "Amenhotep, Ruler of Thebes" (*ʾmnḥtp ḥk3 w3st*) on the reverse face.

²⁴ Parallels for such large plaques and long inscriptions can be found in Egypt, such as the twelve foundation-deposit plaques from a shrine erected by Amenhotep II near the Great Sphinx at Giza. W. F. Albright ("The Egypto-Canaanite Deity Hauron," *BASOR* 84 [1941]: 7-12, esp. figs. 1-2) describes these as averaging 14.5 cm × 8 cm, bluish-green in color, and inscribed "the good god, 'Akhuprur', beloved of Harmachis" (*nṯr nṯr ʿ3-hprw-rʿ mry Hr-m-3hi*). A green-glazed faience plaque of Amenhotep III, found in a foundation

is, I believe, the most likely representation certainly of Taylour's plaque, and possibly of all the plaques as they were originally brought to Mycenae. The photograph on pl. 3 shows the hypothesized positions of Taylour's two fragments in the original plaque.

Credit must be given to Helck, who published the only previous effort at a pictorial reconstruction of these plaques.²⁵ Although his reconstruction is similar to that proposed here, he did not have Taylour's plaque available and did not satisfactorily account for all of the fragments or for their relative positions in the plaques. He also misread the hieroglyphs present on one of the fragments (NMA #12582) and utilized a fragment (NMA #2719) that is not from a plaque but from a faience bowl/dish.²⁶

The plaques from New Kingdom Egypt closest in appearance to those at Mycenae are primarily found in foundation deposits.²⁷ They have the same rectangular shape, similarly inscribed cartouches on both faces, are often of similar size, and are constructed of

deposit in the Eighteenth-Dynasty Osiris Temple at Abydos, measures ca. $19.7 \times 10.5 \times 1.2$ cm, but is inscribed only with the Pharaonic prenom "Neb-Ma'at-Re" (*Nb-mꜛꜥt-Rꜥ*) in a small oval cartouche (see Weinstein [supra n. 21]: 141, 214-15; also W. M. F. Petrie, *Abydos I* [London, 1902], 31, pl. LXI #3). Additional examples of similar faience foundation deposit plaques in Egypt can be readily cited, coming from a variety of sites, including Thebes, Abydos, Sesebi, Amarna, Malkata, Memphis, Matmar, and Giza, and adorned with a variety of Pharaonic inscriptions, including those of Amenhotep II, Amenhotep III, Amenhotep IV/ Akhenaten, Seti I, and Ramses II (see, i.e., Helck [supra n. 15]: 97; W. C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt*, pt. II [Cambridge, Mass., 1959], 246, 332-36; C. Bezold, *The Tell El-Amarna Tablets in the British Museum* [London, 1892], ix-x; Weinstein [supra n. 21]: 210-15, 217-19; and *Ramses le Grand* [Paris, 1976], 48).

²⁵ Helck (supra n. 15): 96.

²⁶ See Cline (supra n. 11) for a short discussion of the latter piece.

It is clear from Taylour's and Mylonas' partial plaques that the top of the original plaques was immediately above the *nfr nfr* hieroglyphs; furthermore, it is clear from fragments NMA #2566.2 and 2566.4 that the bottom of the original plaques was immediately below the *di nh* hieroglyphs. Thus, Helck's reconstruction of *nsw bit* at the top and a papyrus plant at the bottom of the plaques must be regarded as incorrect.

²⁷ As preliminary studies indicated (see Hankey [supra n. 14]: 46; Cline [supra n. 2]: 10). See also Weinstein (supra n. 21): index, v-xxix ("Plaques," "Rectangular Plaques") and examples given in n. 24 supra.



Plate 3. Reverse faces of Taylour's Amenhotep III faience plaque fragments (#68-1000; #69-126); placed according to hypothesized position in original plaque.

the same material. Indeed, Hankey has noted G. T. Martin's suggestion that the plaques found at Mycenae are of the type intended for use in the foundation of a temple or shrine.²⁸

Weinstein defines a foundation deposit in Egypt as being "a type of votive offering placed in or beneath the foundation of a building or in the vicinity at the time of its founding,"²⁹ noting that Eighteenth Dynasty foundation deposits are primarily composed of

²⁸ Hankey (supra n. 14): 46.

²⁹ Weinstein (supra n. 21): lxix.

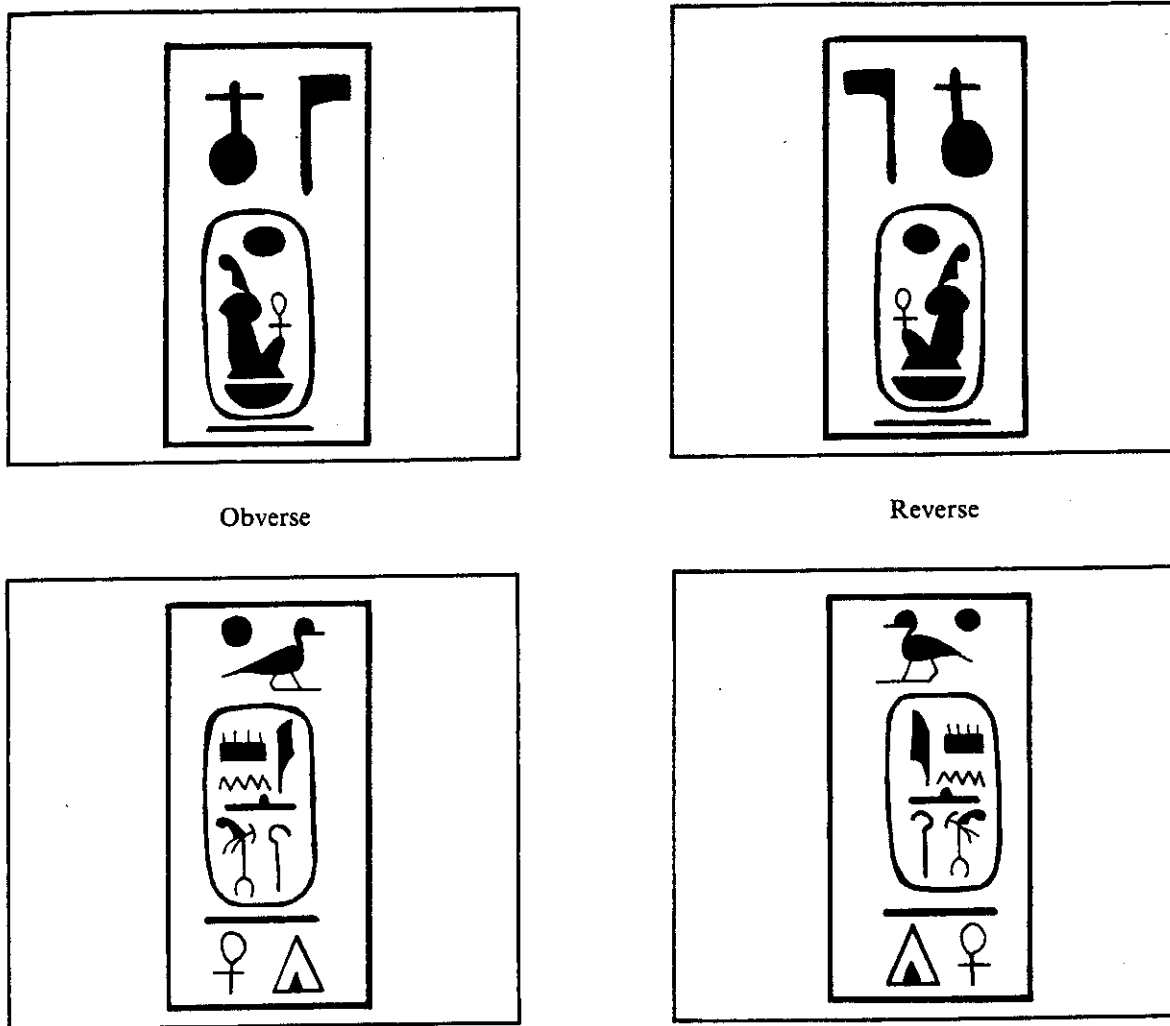


Fig. 3. Suggested reconstruction: Smaller plaques (ca. 10 cm long).

pottery vessels, model tools, food offerings, faience plaques, scarabs, amulets, and other votive objects.³⁰ The cartouche on the plaque identified the Pharaoh who had commissioned the building.³¹ In Egypt, such plaques have been found in deposits of both religious and secular buildings, although in every case the building had been "undertaken at royal command or at least with the king's approval."³² Faience plaques of the type found at Mycenae were, therefore, official or semi-official objects in Egypt.

It is obvious from their findspots that the faience plaques at Mycenae were not in foundation deposits at the time of their final deposition. As a result, we do not know whether they were originally used in deposits for a public building or a shrine, as Hankey has suggested,³³ and then redeposited, or whether these plaques were originally misused, perhaps set into a door of an 'Egyptian Room' at Mycenae as Helck has suggested.³⁴ In short, the actual use of the Egyptian faience plaques at Mycenae is not readily apparent.

³⁰ Ibid., 93, 114.

³¹ Ibid., 35, 435-36.

³² Ibid., 430, 432.

³³ Hankey (*supra* n. 14): 46.

³⁴ Helck (*supra* n. 15): 97.

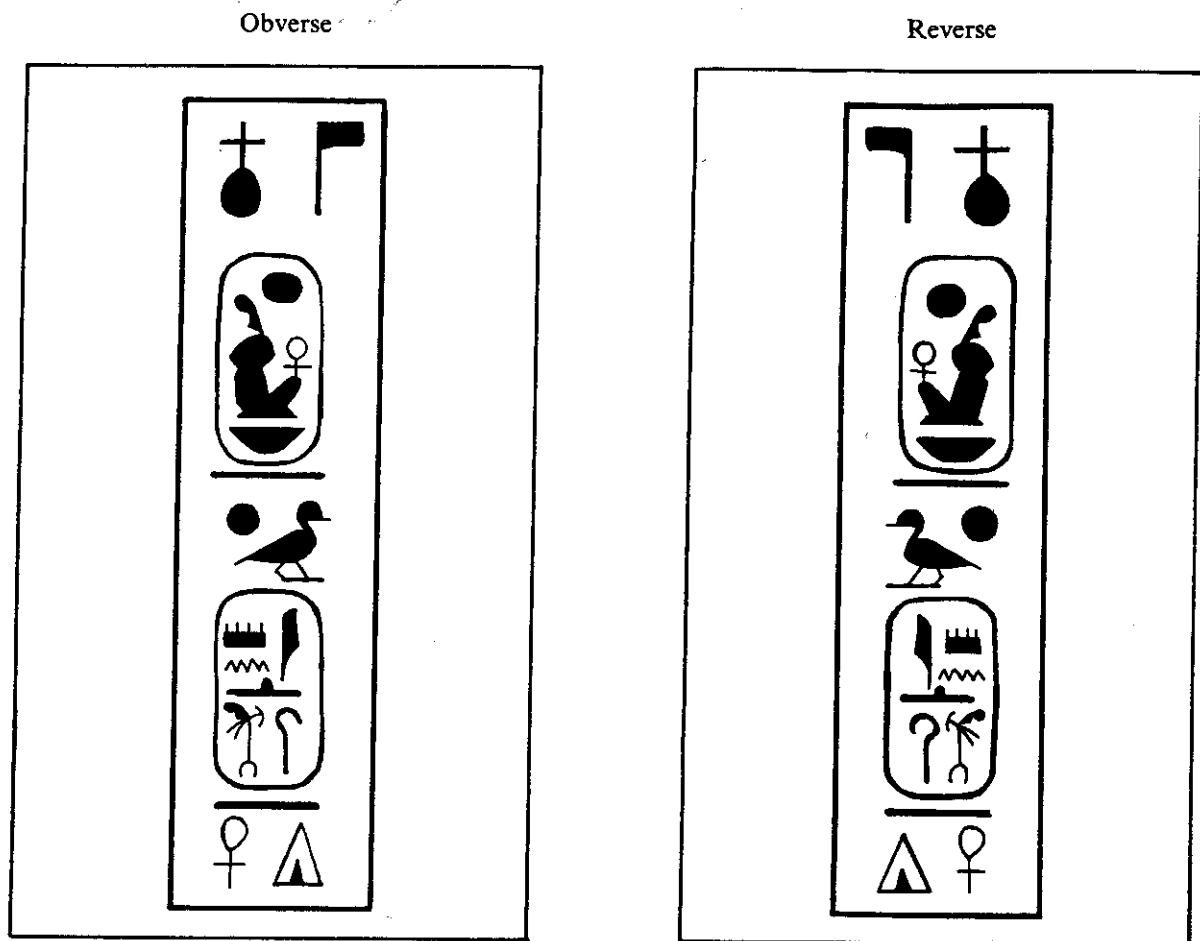


Fig. 4. Suggested reconstruction: Longer plaques (ca. 20 cm long).

As noted elsewhere, the majority of the inscribed objects of Amenhotep III and Queen Tiye at Mycenae were found either in votive contexts or in association with figurines and idols;³⁵ however, of the Egyptian faience-plaque fragments at Mycenae, only Taylour's finds can be construed as having been in a definitely votive context. Harding has concluded that most, if not all, of the Egyptian plaques at Mycenae were redeposited, and notes that they

exemplify the way in which objects—even prestige objects deriving from specific sources or events—can become totally divorced from those sources or events . . . Whatever the precise means by which these semi-

official objects originally came to Mycenae, they were presumably treated as valuable souvenirs, being carefully kept and stored. . . .³⁶

When these plaques arrived at Mycenae remains open to debate. Amenhotep III's reign is generally held to be approximately contemporary with much of the LH IIIA1 period, that is, the early fourteenth century B.C.³⁷ Since the plaque fragments were all found in

³⁵ Hankey (supra n. 14): 46; Cline (supra n. 2): 10; idem (supra n. 11).

³⁶ A. F. Harding, *The Mycenaeans and Europe* (London, 1984), 106.

³⁷ See V. Hankey, "The Chronology of the Aegean Late Bronze Age," in *High, Middle or Low? (Acts of an International Colloquium on Absolute Chronology Held in Gothenburg 20th-22nd August 1987)*, part 2, ed. P. Åström (Gothenburg, 1987), 47, 53; V. Hankey and P. Warren, "The

probable LH IIIB contexts, there is a span of approximately 150 years during which the plaques could have arrived at Mycenae. Given the contexts of other Amenhotep III and Queen Tiye inscribed objects in the Aegean, which range from Late Minoan IIIA1 to Late Helladic IIIA/B,³⁸ and given the correlation between these findspots and the sites named on the 'Aegean' list found at Amenhotep III's mortuary temple at Kom el-Hetan in Egypt,³⁹ it has been suggested elsewhere that the plaques first arrived at Mycenae in the LH IIIA1 period.⁴⁰ It is well known that treasured items were prized as heirlooms and occasionally remained in circulation for decades or even centuries. This may have been the case with the faience plaques at Mycenae.

It is important to note that the inscriptions on the original plaques found at Mycenae were all similar, despite their manufacture by at least two different craftsmen, although inscriptions on similar faience

plaques in Egypt vary greatly.⁴¹ This suggests that these plaques were probably all part of a single commission and executed at about the same time during Amenhotep III's reign, possibly for a specific purpose. However, it is not at all clear whether these plaques were made in Egypt or at Mycenae itself.

On August 3, 1970, a sample of glaze was taken from Taylour's larger fragment by Dr. R. H. Brill of the Corning Museum of Glass. Lead isotope analysis of the sample (Pb-1121) was carried out at the National Bureau of Standards, Gaithersburg, Md., and reported to Dr. Brill by Dr. I. L. Barnes on March 30, 1988. The results, as communicated by Dr. Brill, were unexpected.

Pb-1121 Glazed faience plaque with cartouche of Amenhotep III. No. 68-1000. Sample is of green glaze only, although some contamination of body material may be present (same as CMG anal. 1798). Entire small sample sent to NBS.

Pb-1121	²⁰⁸ Pb/ ²⁰⁶ Pb	²⁰⁷ Pb/ ²⁰⁶ Pb	²⁰⁴ Pb/ ²⁰⁶ Pb
(NBS 1930)	2.06379	0.832715	0.053018

Conclusion: The lead in the glaze is definitely of Type L. Most Type L leads from the ancient world came from the mines in the Laurion region. The lead in the glaze differs markedly from leads found in numerous examples of 18th Dynasty yellow glasses, glazes, and kohl. Improbable as it may seem, the most straight forward interpretation of these findings would be that the object was glazed (and presumably fabricated) somewhere near Mycenae, and not in Egypt.⁴²

Absolute Chronology of the Aegean Late Bronze Age," *BICS* 21 (1974): 151-52; E. F. Wente and C. C. Van Siclen III, "A Chronology of the New Kingdom," in *Studies in Honor of George R. Hughes* (Chicago, 1977), 217-61. See now also P. P. Betancourt, "Dating the Aegean Late Bronze Age with Radiocarbon," *Archaeometry* 29 (1987): 45-49, for a tentative redating of the LH IIIA1 period: beginning in the reign of Thutmose III and ending during the reign of Amenhotep III; however, Betancourt's cited dates (ca. 1490-1430/10 B.C.) must be revised.

³⁸ Cline (supra n. 2): 11-13, table 1.

³⁹ Of the six Aegean sites yielding objects bearing the cartouche of Amenhotep III or his wife Queen Tiye, four appear on the 'Aegean' list at Kom el-Hetan: Knossos, Phaistos/Ayia Triadha, Kydonia, and Mycenae; see Cline (supra n. 2): 6-7, maps 1-2.

⁴⁰ See *ibid.*, 11-13 and Hankey (supra n. 14): 45-46; also G. Glotz, *The Aegean Civilization* (New York, 1925), 212 and A. R. Burn, *Minoans, Philistines, and Greeks* (New York, 1930), 99.

Further analogies might be made with objects of Amenhotep III found in Syro-Palestine and Anatolia; for example, a clay plaque stamped with the cartouche of Amenhotep III and a silver ring with incised seal of Amenhotep III in Tomb B3 at Akko, found with LH IIIA1-2 pottery (see Hankey and Warren [supra n. 37]: 147), and the recent discovery of a scarab of Amenhotep III at Panaztepe on the western coast of Anatolia, found in the company of LH IIIA pottery (see A. Erkanal, "Panaztepe Kazisinių 1985 Yılı Sonuçları," in *VIII. Kazi Sonuçları Toplantısı I* (26-30 May 1986), 258; M. J. Mellink, "Archaeology in Anatolia," *AJA* 91 [1987]: 13).

⁴¹ For examples, see references in n. 24 supra.

⁴² Communicated by Dr. R. H. Brill in a letter to the author dated 4 April 1988. It should be stressed that the results reported here are preliminary and may be subject to revision. The comparison to Egyptian yellow glazes is valid since, as confirmed by J. D. Muhly (private communication), "coloring agents would not affect work on lead used in making the glaze." Relevant lead-isotope-analysis studies include: R. H. Brill and J. M. Wampler, "Isotope Studies of Ancient Lead," *AJA* 71 (1967): 63-77; I. L. Barnes, W. R. Shields, T. J. Murphy, and R. H. Brill, "Isotopic Analysis of Laurion Lead Ores," in *Archaeological Chemistry, Advances in Chemistry Series*, no. 138 (1975), 1-10; R. H. Brill, I. L. Barnes, and B. Adams, "Lead Isotopes in Some Ancient Egyptian Objects," in *Recent Advances in Science and Technology of Materials*, v. 3, ed. A. Bishay, 9-27. I thank Dr. Brill for these references.

This fragment (#68-1000) was also subjected to an analysis by X-ray fluorescence spectrometry, conducted by Dr. R. E. Jones of the Fitch Laboratory of the British School at Athens in 1985. These results, however, proved less helpful, and Dr. Jones was able to conclude only that iron-manganese-rich dark paint was used on a copper-rich blue-green background.⁴³

If the results of Brill's analysis are correct,⁴⁴ we are faced with three possibilities. The first, as Brill has pointed out, is that Taylour's plaque was made locally in Greece, in or near Mycenae, where lead from the Laurion mines in Attica probably predominated over lead from all other sources. The second is that this plaque was made in Egypt, using Laurion lead from Greece. The third is that the plaque was made in Egypt, but using Type L lead from a source other than the Laurion mines.

To address the first possibility, that Taylour's plaque was made at Mycenae, we must remember that this plaque is virtually identical to Egyptian foundation deposit plaques and the hieroglyphs upon it are good enough that the Egyptian origin for the plaque has never previously been called into question. Thus, this plaque must either be a faithful reproduction of a genuine Egyptian Amenhotep III faience plaque brought to Mycenae or must have been constructed by, or under the tutelage of, someone who was familiar with both such plaques and Egyptian hieroglyphs. As noted, there are two groups of these Amenhotep III plaques at Mycenae; perhaps one

group are originals and the other copies? The Tsountas fragments and the Mylonas partial plaque must be analyzed before any such conclusions can be drawn.

If this first possibility is correct, Taylour's Amenhotep III plaque at Mycenae can no longer be considered an Egyptian import.⁴⁵ Ironically, this may make the plaque even more important than before. It will have been manufactured most likely by either an Egyptian living at Mycenae, an Egyptian visiting Mycenae, or a local Mycenaean familiar with Egyptian artifacts and techniques. It is not possible at this point to choose between these options. It is, however, unlikely that such a faithful reproduction would have been created and displayed in an area of such importance, the Cult Center at Mycenae, unless some memorable event were being commemorated. Thus, the hypothesis of an official Egyptian embassy to Mycenae, sent during Amenhotep III's lifetime and recorded on the 'Aegean' list at Kom el-Hetan, may actually be strengthened by the unexpected results of Brill's analysis.⁴⁶

On the other hand, the second possibility, that Taylour's plaque was made in Egypt, might be closer to the truth. It is by no means implausible that Laurion lead was exported to Egypt in the time of Amenhotep III and found its way into this particular object.

⁴³ Communicated by Dr. R. E. Jones in a letter to the author dated 21 May 1988.

⁴⁴ Brill (personal communication) states that it is possible that the lead in the sample analyzed did not come from the glaze itself, but represented heavy contamination from the surroundings—the plaque was found lying in the mouth of a large lead vessel (see supra). He states further, however, "It would have taken an awful lot of contamination to place the sample so squarely within the Laurion group. (If leads having different isotope ratios are mixed together, the ratios resulting from the analysis will be intermediate between the ratios of the unmixed leads, and fall proportionately closer to the one which is present in greater quantity.)" It is also possible that there was an error in the sampling procedure or that the sample somehow became mixed up with another; an effort will be made to conduct another lead-isotope analysis on a fresh sample of the glaze in the near future. In addition, a cross-section analysis by Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) may help to determine Aegean or Egyptian manufacture of the faience itself; again an attempt to conduct such an analysis will be made in the near future.

⁴⁵ If true, one cannot help but wonder how many other Oriental "imports" in the Bronze Age Aegean are actually of local Mycenaean/Minoan manufacture.

⁴⁶ Most recent research has indicated that these faience plaques at Mycenae can be plausibly linked to the 'Aegean' list of Amenhotep III; see Hankey (supra n. 14), 45-46; Helck (supra n. 15): 97; Cline (supra n. 2): 13, 22-23; idem (supra n. 11). However, S. Wachsmann (*Aegeans in the Theban Tombs* [Leuven, 1987], 95-99, 111-14) has recently stated quite opposite conclusions. While agreeing that the 'Aegean' list is a list of Cretan and mainland Greek place-names which had its origins in an itinerary, Wachsmann states that the list was transmitted to Egypt prior to Amenhotep III's reign, that trade and contact between Egypt and the Aegean was probably indirect during his reign, and that the suggestion that the list is an itinerary of envoys sent by Amenhotep III to Crete and mainland Greece cannot be sustained. The above conclusions by Wachsmann, which the present author finds untenable, are largely a restatement of ideas originally expressed by R. S. Merrillees ("Aegean Bronze Age Relations with Egypt," *AJA* 76 [1972]: 281-94; "Mycenaean Pottery from the Time of Akhenaten in Egypt," *The Mycenaeans in the Eastern Mediterranean* [Nicosia, 1973], 175-86) and do not sufficiently take into account the new data which has appeared since Merrillees' articles.

Recent work indicates that the Laurion mines were being worked in the Bronze Age as early as the LH I period and as late as the LH IIIC period, and that lead, and probably silver as well, from the Laurion mines was being exported to Egypt at least as early as 1500 B.C.⁴⁷ According to analyses conducted by N. H. Gale, three lead objects found in Egypt itself, a lead bar and the lead filling of a duck weight from Amarna, and a lead net sinker from Abydos, all of Eighteenth-Dynasty date, are composed of Laurion-type lead.⁴⁸ Gale has already noted that "the Egyptian artefacts with Laurion composition . . . suggest some sort of contact between the Mycenaean and Egyptian cultures at this time."⁴⁹

If of Egyptian manufacture, Taylour's Amenhotep III plaque may have been sent from Egypt in much the same manner and with perhaps the same significance as the 'Large Commemorative Scarabs' more commonly sent by that Pharaoh.⁵⁰ It would be likely, in this case, that the plaque did arrive at Mycenae as part of a formal contact, perhaps even via the official Egyptian delegation to Mycenae mentioned above. One might hypothesize that the entire group of inscribed Pharaonic objects found at Mycenae, including the two scarabs of Queen Tiye and the faience vase of Amenhotep III, as well as all the faience plaques, formed part of a single royal gift.⁵¹ The scale of these items is small in comparison to the gifts sent elsewhere by Amenhotep III and Akhenaten at this

approximate time,⁵² and thus the royally inscribed faience objects at Mycenae may have been only a portion of a Pharaonic present. Other gift items, including gold, silver, stone, and faience vessels, may be present but unrecognized as such within the Orientalia at LH III Mycenae,⁵³ and additional objects, such as ebony furniture, may not have left identifiable traces in the archaeological record. The motivations underlying such a Pharaonic gift could have included a simple exchange between equal or even unequal powers, a diplomatic present sent to woo a potential ally, or an offering intended to further economic exchanges.⁵⁴

With the third possibility, that the plaque was made in Egypt and the lead came from a source other than the Laurion mines, we would return to the original assumption held by Hankey, Helck and other researchers: that Taylour's Amenhotep III plaque was simply made in Egypt and arrived at Mycenae through some hypothesized chain of events. One must keep in mind, however, that Hankey was correct in suggesting that these plaques at Mycenae are neither ordinary trade goods nor mere 'bric-a-brac' that accompanied Late Bronze Age trade in perishable goods.⁵⁵ Normally, Egyptian faience foundation plaques are extremely rare outside the Egyptian territories and, contra Wachsmann,⁵⁶ these at Mycenae, whether imported or of local manufacture, must be viewed as items of special worth. Their arrival at Mycenae is more likely to have been connected with a prestigious than a mundane event: tokens delivered by an official delegation rather than souvenirs brought home by an itinerant merchant.

Whatever the reason for their presence at Mycenae, these faience plaques at Mycenae can and have been used as evidence for Egypto-Aegean relations.⁵⁷

⁴⁷ See especially H.-G. Buchholz, "Das Blei in der mykenischen und bronzzeitlichkyprischen Metallurgie," *JdI* 87 (1972): 1-59; N. H. Gale, "Some Aspects of Lead and Silver Mining in the Aegean," in *Thera and the Aegean World II* (London, 1980), 161-95; Z. A. Stos-Gale and N. H. Gale, "The Sources of Mycenaean Silver and Lead," *JFA* 9 (1982): 467-85.

⁴⁸ Gale (supra n. 47): 178, 180-81 (table 4 and fig. 9).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁵⁰ Five separate issues of these large scarabs were distributed, both within Egypt proper and in the territories under Egyptian control; each set commemorated a "significant" event of the reign of Amenhotep III. See principally C. Blankenberg and van Delden, *The Large Commemorative Scarabs of Amenhotep III* (Leiden, 1969) and updates in *JEA* 62 (1976): 74-80 and *JEA* 63 (1977): 83-87. To date, not one of these scarabs has been found in the Aegean; the closest comes from an eleventh-century B.C. tomb at Paleopaphos-Skales, Cyprus (see V. Karageorghis, *Cyprus: From the Stone Age to the Romans* [London, 1982], 68).

⁵¹ See Cline (supra n. 2): 8-9, figs. 3-9; *idem* (supra n. 11); also Glotz (supra n. 40): 212 and Burn (supra n. 40): 99.

⁵² Detailed descriptions of such royal gifts can be found in the Amarna letters, i.e., EA 5, 14, 31; see J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna Tafeln* (Leipzig, 1907).

⁵³ See Cline (supra n. 11).

⁵⁴ See C. Zaccagnini, "Aspects of Ceremonial Exchange in the Near East During the Late Second Millennium B.C.," in *Centre and Periphery in the Ancient World*, ed. M. Rowlands, M. T. Larsen, and K. Kristiansen (Cambridge, 1987), 57-58; also P. M. Warren, "The Aegean and Egypt: Matters For Research," *Discussions in Egyptology* 2 (1985): 61-62. See also Cline (supra n. 2): 23 and *idem* (supra n. 11) for previous suggestions made by the present author.

⁵⁵ Hankey (supra n. 14): 46.

⁵⁶ Wachsmann (supra n. 46): 113.

⁵⁷ Most recently, M. Bernal (*Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, v. I: *The Fabrication of*

Whether Mycenae had already become a major power on mainland Greece at this time, thus stimulating Egyptian interest, or whether it was Egyptian influence that helped Mycenae to rise to a dominant position in the LH III Aegean is still an unresolved but interesting question.⁵⁸ Those who believe in a significant Egyptian influence in the Bronze Age Aegean currently constitute a minority within the archaeological community; how-

Ancient Greece 1785-1985 [London, 1987], 21, 69) cited these plaques as evidence to support the suggestion that "the Eleusinian cult of Archaic Greece was the descendant of an Egyptian foundation made there 700 years earlier."

⁵⁸ Cline (supra n. 2): 19-22.

ever, this situation may change as a result of recent and forthcoming publications.⁵⁹ In the not too distant future we may have to reevaluate our concepts concerning the relations between Egypt and the Aegean during the Late Helladic IIIA period.

⁵⁹ I.e., Cline (supra n. 2); L. V. Watrous, *Kommos III: The Late Bronze Age Pottery* (especially chap. 3: "Imported Pottery and Foreign Relations") (Princeton, forthcoming); also dissertations in progress by J. Phillips (U. Toronto), C. Lambrou-Phillipson (U. Athens), and the author (U. Pennsylvania). I am grateful to Dr. Watrous for allowing me to read a preliminary version of his manuscript.