

# BEYOND THE NILE

EGYPT AND THE CLASSICAL WORLD



JEFFREY SPIER  
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# Memphis, Minos, and Mycenae: Bronze Age Contact between Egypt and the Aegean

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JORRIT M. KELDER,  
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Before 3000 BC, when there was no unified Egyptian state that controlled the entirety of the Nile Valley, the various communities along the shores of the Nile were already trading with each other and with people further afield. Close ties with communities in Canaan, and through these with regions further to the north, are evident from the numerous Sumerian- and Elamite-inspired elements in Late Predynastic and Early Dynastic ruler iconography. From Dynasty 6 (ca. 2345–2181 BC) onward, Egyptian texts speak of “Byblos ships,” an indication of the growing importance of maritime trade, especially with the coastal city of Byblos (in present-day Lebanon). Through this and other Levantine trading centers, Egypt was connected to the world beyond, including the Aegean littoral. Increasing numbers of imported materials, objects, ideas, and even foreign people attest to Egypt’s ever-widening horizon until, at the beginning of the second millennium BC, an international age began that witnessed unprecedented contact between the various regions of the ancient Mediterranean.

Early on, Minoan Crete was part of this international network, as shown by a small number of Egyptian imports found in mid- to late third-millennium BC contexts at Knossos, such as a fragment of an obsidian bowl.<sup>1</sup> Egyptian scarabs dating to the First Intermediate Period (ca. 2160–2055 BC) have been found at various sites on Crete, and from the Middle Minoan I period (ca. 2000–1800 BC) onward, Minoan craftsmen started producing their own scarab seals, although with Minoan motifs rather than Egyptian hieroglyphs (cat. 1, 2). Egyptian religious concepts appear to have penetrated Minoan society around this same time. A terracotta sistrum (a type of musical rattle used in Egyptian ritual), which was found in a Middle Minoan IA (ca. 2000–1900 BC) context at Archanes, seems to be a local imitation of the Egyptian instrument (cat. 6). Sistra, first attested in the Egyptian



Old Kingdom (ca. 2686–2125 BC), played a role in various religious ceremonies. Although it is impossible to state whether these objects were used in an identical way on Crete, a depiction of a sistrum held by a man in a religious procession on the Harvester Vase from Agia Triada (cat. 7) suggests an understanding of the instrument's ritual function.

Around 2000 BC, momentous changes were taking place on Crete, centered around the construction of the so-called Old Palaces at a number of cities, including Malia, Knossos, and Phaistos. Although the precise function of these palaces remains uncertain, it does seem that they were the focus of local economic and religious activity, and their construction is usually seen as an important indication of social stratification. It is plausible that increased Minoan contact with Egypt and other states of the ancient Near East prompted the construction of the earliest Minoan palaces and the formation of the social structures that supported such buildings.<sup>2</sup>

Although the emergence of the palaces on Crete in the early second millennium BC was largely an indigenous development centered on the exploitation of natural resources such as the olive and the vine, agriculture alone cannot explain why this type of structure and associated social organization appears to have been a uniquely Cretan feature, and was not mirrored by regions elsewhere in the Aegean (or indeed in the central and western Mediterranean). What set Crete apart from these other regions was overseas trade with the ancient Near East, especially Cyprus, the Syro-Palestinian littoral, and Egypt. The very concept of palaces and perhaps even associated notions of kingship and certain religious beliefs and practices (such as the use of the sistrum) may have found their way to Crete via this maritime trade.

Much remains unclear about the period of the Old Palaces on Crete, in part because the absolute chronology is not fully understood. Nonetheless, it is likely that from about 2000 BC onward, Minoan Crete was part of a larger trading network that connected the various states of the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East and adopted some of the social, cultural, and perhaps political trappings of those states. The construction of monumental palaces may be considered in this context, but perhaps even more telling is the roughly contemporary emergence of the first Aegean scripts. Although they remain undeciphered, the appearance of the scripts known as Cretan Hieroglyphic and the roughly contemporary (and probably related) Linear A cannot be seen as a purely indigenous Cretan development. Instead, it is likely that the concept of writing, and quite possibly some of the generic shapes of these scripts, originated in the Near East, most likely in western Anatolia, where there is strong evidence for the contemporary use of so-called Luwian Hieroglyphic.<sup>3</sup>

Contact and exchange between Egypt and Crete were not only one way, for the Egyptians appreciated Minoan goods, too. Egyptian texts record the importing of Minoan aromatic oils, which were used for anointing and embalming, and Minoan pottery appeared in Egypt at this same time (cat. 24, 38–40). The shapes of the imported vessels are notable. Many were of an open shape and clearly did not serve as containers for imported goods; they must have been brought to Egypt because of their aesthetic qualities and because they could be used in an Egyptian cultural context. Jugs and cups could be used during dining and drinking parties, but other vessels, most notably rhyta, must have served other purposes. On Minoan Crete, this type of vessel was normally associated with cult activity, and there are indications that the Egyptians knew and appreciated the religious function of such vessels and used them in similar ways.<sup>4</sup> Imitations of these vessels made by local craftsmen suggest they were very fashionable (cat. 41). At the important harbor town of Avaris in the Nile Delta, modern-day Tell el-Dab'a (see Bietak and von Rüdén, this volume), two locally made Minoanizing miniature rhyta were discovered with a large number of other vessels in an outdoor cult setting, and it is possible that these imitations were used in a ritual that involved drinking or toasting.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the presence of silver cups with Minoan stylistic traits in the treasure found at Tôd in Upper Egypt, and thought to date to the reign of Amenemhat II (ca. 1911–1877 BC), may indicate the use of Aegean tableware in an Egyptian cult context (cat. 12–16).

No doubt the desire for metals helped drive the Minoan long-distance maritime trade. Copper was acquired mostly from Cyprus, and gold must have reached Crete predominantly from Egypt, either directly or via trading posts in the Levant. Tin seems to have come primarily from the region of present-day Afghanistan, via Mari and Ugarit in Syria, though some tin and some silver may have been acquired in western or southern Anatolia. Mainland Greece was probably also a major source of silver, and there is evidence for Minoan interest in the strategically positioned islands close to silver mines, such as Samothrace, where a number of clay sealings with Linear A and Cretan hieroglyphic signs indicate a Minoan presence,<sup>6</sup> and Aegina, in the Saronic Gulf. **Kolonna, an important site on Aegina which appears to have been of particular interest to the Minoans**, probably controlled the trade with the silver- and tin-rich region of Laurion (just south of modern-day Athens). Minoan pottery dating as early as 2000 BC has been discovered at that site, and although the precise nature of the relations between Kolonna and the Minoan palaces is unclear, there can be no doubt that Kolonna was steadily drawn into the Minoan orbit. Evidence of this relationship is provided by the collection of jewelry known as the Aegina Treasure (cat. 19–22), discovered under unknown

circumstances on the island. The complex stylistic influences displayed on the Aeginetan goldwork derive from both Minoan and Egyptian sources of the late seventeenth century BC.

In Egypt, the period of stable rule known as the Middle Kingdom, which had begun about 2055 BC, came to an end about 1650 BC. Although it is unclear what caused the collapse of the dynasty, the effects are evident: Nubia, the region in the south where most of the Egyptian gold was mined, broke away under its own indigenous line of kings, and various local rulers established themselves throughout the Nile Delta, most importantly at Avaris, and at the relatively recent foundation of Thebes in Upper Egypt. Over the course of the seventeenth century BC, Avaris rapidly developed from a typical, grid-planned Egyptian provincial town into a cosmopolitan urban center of some 250 hectares (roughly 620 acres) and was home to some 25,000 to 40,000 inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> Under a line of kings of Levantine (Canaanite) origin called by the Egyptians *heqa khasut* (or *Hyksos* in its Greek form), meaning “Rulers of the Foreign Lands,” Avaris came to dominate the Egyptian Delta and, around 1600 BC, probably enjoyed a degree of hegemony over most of the Nile Valley. This meteoric rise was no doubt due to the wealth brought by maritime trade with the Levant and Cyprus, as well as with Minoan Crete. The success of this trade was greatly facilitated by the city’s topography, which included a series of turtle-back islands in the eastern, Pelusiac branch of the Nile, providing ample space to harbor seaworthy ships. Although politically divided and in part ruled by foreign kings, Egypt was a more connected place than it had ever been before.

Notable changes occurred on Crete at this time as well.

Around 1700 BC, the palaces on the island were destroyed, quite possibly by a series of earthquakes, although human conflict cannot be excluded. Whatever the cause of these destructions, the settlements and palaces were swiftly rebuilt on an even grander scale. Knossos, which had always been the largest settlement on the island, now covered some 100 hectares (about 250 acres). At its heart, the New Palace spread to cover some 1.3 hectares (3.2 acres), and its monumentality suggests that Knossos may have established its authority over the island’s other palaces. The proliferation of “villas” in the Cretan countryside around the same time indicates more expansive wealth and a changing sociopolitical structure.

Crete had become a major maritime power, one that was fully integrated into the trading networks that connected the various states of the eastern Mediterranean. Indeed, there is evidence for Minoan expansion beyond Crete at places such as Miletos on the west coast of Anatolia (which seems to have been a Minoan foundation of the seventeenth century BC), and Minoans and their culture are also increasingly visible in the

Near East. In an early eighteenth-century BC text from Mari, a city on the Upper Euphrates River in Syria, merchants from *Kaptara*—the Akkadian name for Crete—are said to have visited the important Syrian harbor town of Ugarit, apparently in order to purchase tin and textiles. Another text from the same town refers to the importation of Cretan-made textiles, gold vessels, and gold weapons with lapis-lazuli hilts. During the seventeenth century BC, frescoes in Minoan style were made in the palaces of Alalakh (Syria) and Tel Kabri (Israel), indicating that Cretan craftsmen were hired by these Levantine elites.<sup>8</sup>

Minoan culture not only was appreciated in the Near East but also grew increasingly fashionable among the Mycenaeans on the Greek mainland. Precious Minoan imports, including metal vases and seals displaying Minoan motifs, such as bulls and bull-leapers, are found at Messenia and in the Argolid in southern Greece.<sup>9</sup> In these regions, too, a local Mycenaean elite emerged, which built fortified citadels and used Minoan luxury goods as symbols of high status.

Minoan art clearly had great international appeal, even in the predominantly inward-focused arts of Egypt. Minoan objects became popular with the elite at both Avaris and Thebes, and a Minoan style of decoration was sometimes adopted by palace artists. When the Theban Queen Ahhotep died about 1530 BC, she was buried at a site now known as Dra’abu el-Naga, close to Thebes. On a stela erected by her (probable) son, Pharaoh Ahmose (ca. 1550–1525 BC), she is celebrated as the one who liberated Egypt from the Hyksos, “who took care of the soldiers . . . and pacified Upper Egypt.”<sup>10</sup> Ahhotep was probably married to Pharaoh Seqenenre Tao, who fell in battle against the Hyksos, and she may have ruled Thebes as regent for her young son. Her extraordinary status is evident from the contents of her tomb, which, along with her gilded coffin, included such objects as three “golden flies” (essentially the ancient Egyptian equivalent of the Medal of Honor) and a ceremonial gold-plated battle axe (fig. 1). The axe is of particular interest, for it is decorated not only with typically Egyptian motifs, but also with a griffin of Aegean type, with close parallels in the painted griffins flanking the throne in the palace of Knossos. Other objects from Ahhotep’s tomb, such as a dagger with an engraved scene of a lion chasing a bull, also show the Egyptian adaptation of Aegean prototypes. Perhaps the most remarkable object of all, however, is a silver model of a ship of a type closely resembling contemporary Minoan vessels known from frescoes (fig. 2). The question of why this particular queen was interred with so many Aegean-inspired objects has been much debated. Minoans may have lived with, and fought for, the Hyksos at Avaris, and the Minoan ship model could have been brought back after the conquest of that city by Ahmose. Alternatively, as has been suggested on the basis



**FIGURE 1** | Ceremonial axe with winged griffin, Egyptian, Dynasty 17, ca. 1560–1530 BC. Found in the tomb of Queen Ahhotep, Dra’abu el-Naga, western Thebes. Copper head and cedar wood handle, both gold-plated, L (head): 16.3 cm (6<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.), W: 6.7 cm (2<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.). Luxor Museum, JE 4673

**FIGURE 2** | Model of a ship, Egyptian, Dynasty 17, ca. 1560–1530 BC. Found in the tomb of Queen Ahhotep, Dra’abu el-Naga, western Thebes. Silver, 6.4 × 48 × 6.8 cm (2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> × 18<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 2<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.). Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JE 4682



of one of Ahhotep’s royal titles, the queen herself may have been of Minoan descent.<sup>11</sup> It is likely that the Minoans traded with both the Hyksos and the Thebans. Scarabs and other objects bearing the names of Hyksos kings, such as an inscribed travertine lid with the name of Pharaoh Khyan (cat. 8), have been found on Crete. Even after the Theban conquest of the Delta around 1550 BC, there is no indication of a cessation of contact with the Minoan world.

Indeed, in the century following the unification of Egypt under Theban rule, Minoans appear increasingly frequently in the Egyptian archaeological record, most strikingly in the frescoes in Minoan style found at Avaris (see Bietak and von Ruden, this volume; cat. 44), which remained an important trading hub and royal residence throughout the New Kingdom (ca. 1550–1069 BC). It is at this time also that Minoans are first mentioned in Egyptian texts. During the reign of Thutmose III (ca. 1479–1425 BC) or



Hatshepsut (ca. 1473–1458 BC), *Keftiu* appears as the designation for a class of ship that was being built or repaired in an Egyptian royal dockyard, and messengers from *Keftiu* bringing typically Minoan objects, such as bull-shaped rhyta, are depicted on the walls of the tombs of high courtiers at Thebes (cat. 42, 43). There can be no doubt that *Keftiu* was the Egyptian designation for Crete, for these messengers, with their long curly hair, slender waists, and colorful loincloths, look remarkably like the Minoans shown on the frescoes of the palace of Knossos itself.

During the reign of Thutmose III, however, some of the colorful Minoan loincloths were painted over as kilts, perhaps in response to the arrival at the Egyptian court of a new Aegean people, the Mycenaeans, reflecting their status as the new masters of Crete.<sup>12</sup> Most tellingly, it was at this time, around 1450 BC, that the Minoan palaces all met with destruction and were not rebuilt, the sole exception being the palace at Knossos. Archaeological evidence suggests that palatial life continued, but there were notable changes in culture and scribal practice. A new script known as Linear B was introduced and, unlike Linear A, it has been deciphered and found to be Greek, the language of the Mycenaeans. Although Minoan culture appears to have survived to some degree, the island became increasingly Greek in character.

There appear to have been only sporadic encounters between the Mycenaeans and Egypt before the sixteenth

century BC, when local chieftains on the Greek mainland and nearby islands sought luxury objects and materials, some of which came from Egypt. The largest concentration of such objects was found in the Shaft Graves of Mycenae, discovered by the German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann in 1876. The enormous quantity of precious metals deposited in these tombs—some sixteen kilos of gold and a similar amount of silver—and exotic imports, such as a vase made of an ostrich egg, are clear expressions of the wealth and power of the Mycenaean elite in the sixteenth century. It has been suggested, though never proven, that some of the Mycenaeans made their fortune in Egypt, where they may have found employment as mercenaries in the war that had erupted between the kings of Thebes in the south and the Hyksos at Avaris in the north of Egypt.<sup>13</sup> Later literary sources, as well as the wounds apparently caused by a Hyksos dagger and axe on the mummy of the Theban king Seqenenre Tao, testify to the brutal conflict, which ended in Theban victory around 1540 BC.

The Egyptians seem to have regarded the Greek mainland as a single entity (though not necessarily a single state), called by them the land of *Tanaju*. In a lengthy text in the temple of Karnak recounting the deeds of Thutmose III, one passage relates how the king received a group of messengers from *Tanaju*, who brought him “a silver jug in *Keftiu*-style and three iron cups fitted with silver handles.”<sup>14</sup> A slightly later inscription on a large statue base from Kom el-Hetan (fig. 3), the site of the mortuary temple of



FIGURE 3 | Statue base with Aegean name list, Egyptian, Dynasty 18, ca. 1390–1352 BC. Found in the mortuary temple of Amenhotep III, Kom el-Hetan, Thebes. Granite, W: approx. 200 cm (78¾ in.). In situ



**FIGURE 4** | Ceiling painting with bulls' heads and rosettes, Egyptian, Dynasty 18, ca. 1390–1352 BC. Found in the antechamber to the king's bedroom, palace of Amenhotep III, Malqata, Thebes. Dried mud, mud plaster, paint gesso, 140 × 140 cm (55½ × 55½ in.). New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 11.215.451

Amenhotep III (ca. 1390–1352 BC), specifically lists a number of regions and cities that were apparently part of *Tanaju*, including Mycenae, Nauplion, and possibly Messenia and the Greek Thebaid (as well as a number of locations that have not been securely identified).<sup>15</sup> These texts demonstrate not only that a Mycenaean king was sending messengers to the Egyptian court by the late fifteenth century BC, but also that, not much later, the Egyptians had sufficient knowledge of the Mycenaean world to compile some sort of topographical list of its cities and regions. There is also evidence that Egyptians found their way to Greece, for two Linear B texts from Knossos refer to individuals called *ai-ku-pi-ti-jo* (*Aiguptios*: an Egyptian; cat. 48) and *mi-sa-ra-jo* (from the Akkadian *Misr*, or Egypt, which remains the Hebrew and the Arabic designation to this day).<sup>16</sup>

In addition to trade, possible diplomatic ties between Egypt and the Mycenaean world are suggested by a number of discoveries in Greece. Remarkably, objects bearing the royal cartouche of Amenhotep III or that of his wife, Queen Tiye (cat. 51), have been found in precisely those sites that are mentioned in the Kom el-Hetan inscription, hinting at a possible Egyptian mission that visited the major cities of the Mycenaean world. Mycenae itself seems to have been the focus of Amenhotep's interest, for a total of eleven faience plaques (cat. 50), all bearing Amenhotep's royal cartouche, have been recovered from its citadel. The plaques may have adorned the door of an Egyptian room on the Mycenaean acropolis or perhaps were meant to serve as a foundation deposit somewhere at the site.<sup>17</sup> In any case, the uniqueness of these plaques (for which there are no direct parallels, even in Egypt) suggests an Egyptian royal gift of special significance.

Amenhotep III may have sent a diplomatic mission to the Aegean with the aim of establishing a military alliance, but there may have been other considerations, too. Silver and lead from Laurion, at this time no doubt under the control of Mycenae, must have attracted Egyptian interest. Aegean palace decoration continued to appeal to the Egyptian kings, as indicated by the frescoes with rows of bulls' heads and rosettes from Amenhotep's palace at Malqata, near Thebes (fig. 4).<sup>18</sup> Greece, however, had more to offer than metals and murals. During the reign of Amenhotep's son and successor Akhenaten (ca. 1352–1336 BC), contacts between Egypt and the Mycenaean world reached a new level of intensity and diversity. Nowhere is this more evident than at Akhenaten's newly built capital, Akhetaten, today called Tell el-'Amarna. Some 2000 sherds of Mycenaean pottery, representing at least 600 whole pots, have been found there, the bulk of them from rubbish heaps in the so-called Central City, the area of Akhetaten that housed the royal palace, ministries, and main temple to the solar deity Aten. Smaller quantities of Mycenaean pottery have been found in the northern and southern suburbs



(the main domestic areas of the city), and Mycenaean pottery dating from this time until the end of the twelfth century BC has been discovered at sites throughout Egypt (cat. 52–55).

The sudden appearance of large numbers of Mycenaean pots, which are generally believed to have served as containers for perfumed olive oil, may be related to the contemporaneous appearance of the olive in the Egyptian archaeological record. Whereas remains of olives have been found rarely in strata prior to the reign of Akhenaten, the fruit is omnipresent in the Amarna age. Next to a fully grown olive tree, an olive twig is depicted as an offering to the Sun on a sculpted block from the wall of the Great Aten temple (fig. 5). Six actual wreaths of olive were found in the tomb of Akhenaten's successor Tutankhamun, including a tiny wreath of olive leaves and cornflowers that had been placed on the pharaoh's sarcophagus. In addition, a large olive wreath was found in a house in Akhetaten's Central City. The prominence of the olive at el-'Amarna suggests that from the reign of Akhenaten onward, it became a familiar part of Egyptian life. Egyptian contacts with the Mycenaean world at this time may well have provided the impetus for the establishment of the first olive groves in Egypt.<sup>19</sup>

Contacts between Egypt and the Aegean evolved from irregular exchanges of precious objects and raw materials to deeper ties that included the exchange of specialists to make Aegean-style murals for palaces and ritual objects such as the



**FIGURE 5** | Relief of a hand holding an olive branch, Egyptian, Dynasty 18, ca. 1353–1323 bc. Probably originally from Tell el-Amarna (Akhetaten). Limestone with pigment, H: 22 cm (8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in.). New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1981.449

**FIGURE 6** | Egyptian and Mycenaean warriors, Egyptian, Dynasty 18, ca. 1346–1332 bc. Found in the Chapel of the King's Statue, Tell el-Amarna (Akhetaten). Painted papyrus, 10.3 × 10.47 cm (4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.). London, The British Museum, EA74100

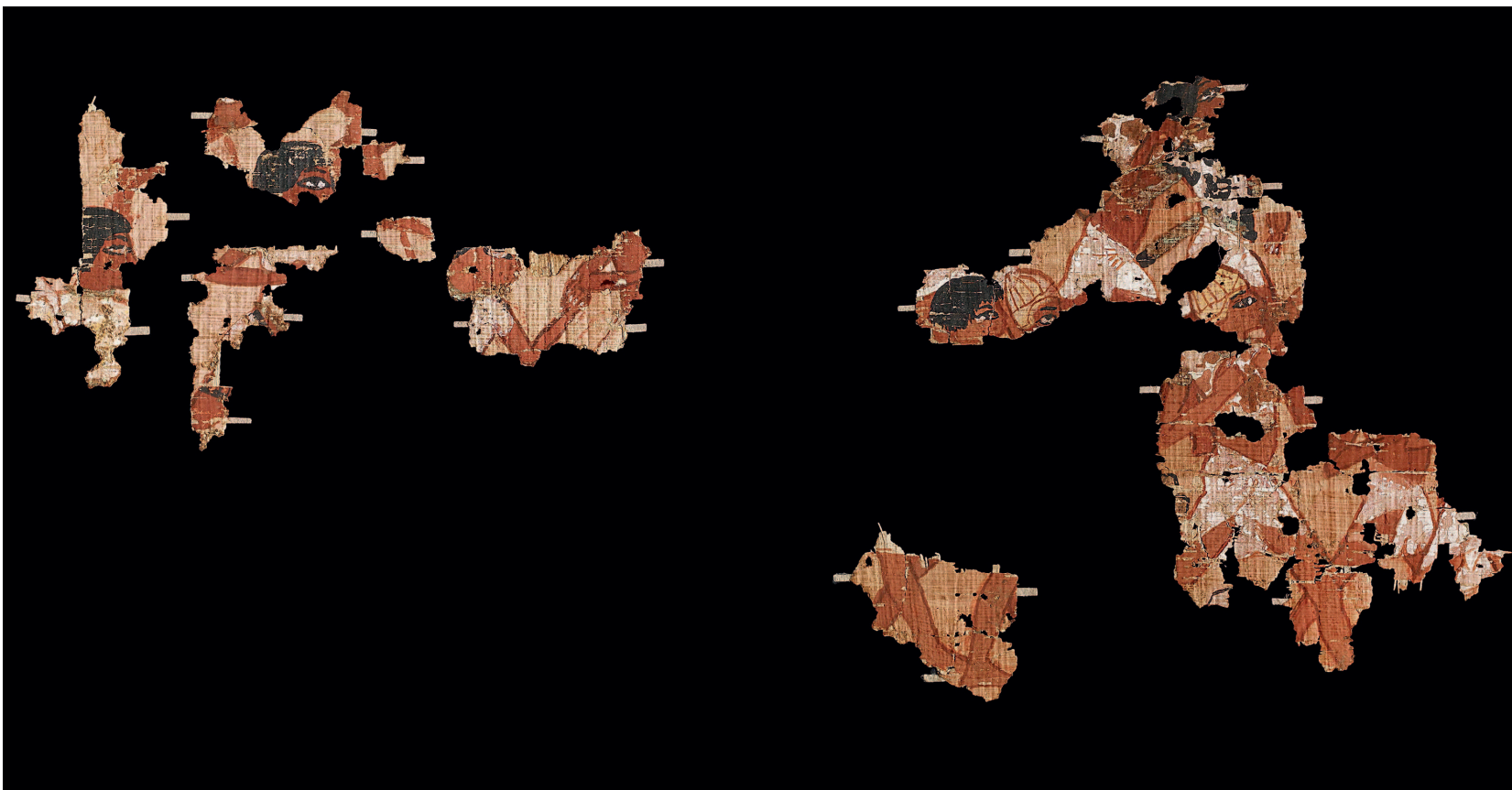
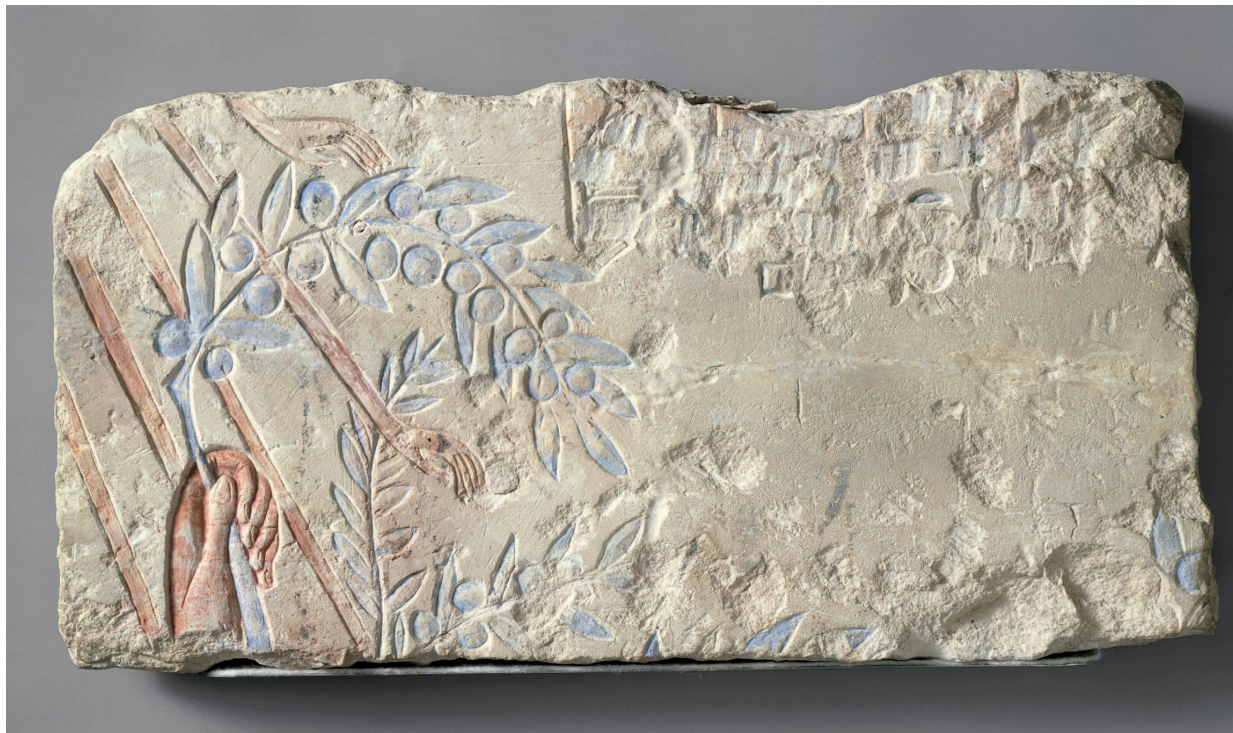






FIGURE 7 | Queen Nefertare wearing Aegean earrings, Egyptian, Dynasty 19, ca. 1300–1255 bc. Wall painting in the Tomb of Queen Nefertare, Valley of the Queens, Thebes. In situ



sistrum, to undertake diplomatic missions, and to introduce the cultivation of the olive. There is also evidence at el-'Amarna that Mycenaeans may have served as soldiers for Akhenaten. Fragments of an unusual pictorial papyrus (fig. 6) were discovered next to a complete Mycenaean stirrup jar within the remains of a small structure that probably once served as a shrine for the worship of a statue of the king. The brightly colored scenes on the papyrus depict a battle between Egyptian forces and Libyan tribesmen and include a unique depiction of an Egyptian soldier under duress. Coming to his aid are a group of soldiers who, judging from their typically Egyptian white kilts, fight for the Egyptians. But unlike regular Egyptian forces, these warriors wear cropped leather body armor and vertically segmented yellow helmets (the pigment used is orpiment). These are almost certainly meant to represent boar tusk helmets, a uniquely Aegean type that was worn by the Mycenaean elite.<sup>20</sup> Examples of such helmets are depicted on contemporary Mycenaean frescoes and exquisitely carved ivory plaques, and are mentioned in Homer's *Iliad*, where just such a helmet is given to Odysseus by the Cretan hero Meriones (10.260–65). Actual pieces of such helmets have survived, including an example datable to the late fifteenth or early fourteenth century BC from a tomb at Dendra, near Mycenae, and a fourteenth-century fragment from Mycenae itself.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, leather body armor is depicted on painted vases.<sup>22</sup> Mycenaean mercenaries continued to be employed by Akhenaten's successors. **The discovery of a piece of boar's tusk, complete with perforations to attach it to the inner leather cap of a helmet, at Pi-Ramesse in the eastern Delta suggests that Mycenaean warriors were present** at this important thirteenth-century BC royal residence and military base.

As already noted, from the reign of Akhenaten onward, Mycenaean pottery was regularly imported into Egypt, and, as they had done with Minoan pots in the past, Egyptian craftsmen produced their own versions of these foreign shapes in the traditional Egyptian material, faience (cat. 56). Silver also remained popular with Egypt's elite, and **Queen Nefertare, the wife of Ramesses II (ca. 1279–1213 BC), is portrayed wearing silver earrings of Mycenaean type** on the walls of her tomb in the Valley of the Queens (fig. 7). It is likely that most such Mycenaean goods reached Egypt through royal gift exchange, and indeed, it has been suggested that Nefertare's silver earrings were presented to her on the occasion of her husband's coronation.<sup>23</sup> Whatever the explanation for the earrings, diplomatic contacts between the Mycenaean and Egyptian courts certainly continued until at least the reign of Ramesses II.

The presence of mercenaries at Tell el-'Amarna and Pi-Ramesse, however, is best explained as private initiatives rather than as a result of a diplomatic agreement. The discovery on the

island of Salamis of a bronze lamella that was once part of an expensive suit of Egyptian scale armor suggests that some of these soldiers, after making their fortune in Egyptian service, may have brought their equipment home.<sup>24</sup> Not all of these Mycenaean mercenaries necessarily entered Egyptian service voluntarily, however; some may have been taken prisoners of war. Their first appearance at el-'Amarna coincides with references in diplomatic texts to groups of pirates that were disrupting trade routes and, occasionally, appear to have raided the coast of Cyprus. Over the course of the thirteenth century BC, such acts appear to have become more frequent. Ramesses II was able to defeat a group of Sherden (also called Shardana) warriors who invaded the Egyptian Delta early in his reign and subsequently incorporated the survivors into his army (see Cline, this volume). Merneptah (ca. 1213–1203 BC), the successor of Ramesses II, had to cope with increasing numbers of invading groups, and the impression now is one of major migrations, possibly triggered by a combination of natural disasters, ensuing famines, and social unrest. **Egypt survived the turmoil that heralded the end of the Bronze Age, but virtually all other major states in the eastern Mediterranean collapsed.**<sup>25</sup> **Among the casualties was the Mycenaean world, and over the course of the late thirteenth and twelfth centuries BC, all its major cities were abandoned, destroyed, or left impoverished. Contact between Egypt and the Aegean world all but ceased. The depiction of a group of Mycenaean stirrup jars on a wall in the tomb of Ramesses III (ca. 1184–1153 BC) is the last indication of contact, after which the Aegean disappears from the Egyptian record.**

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| 1 Warren and Hankey 1989, 125; Warren 1995, 1; Phillips 1996, 459.   | 11 Jánosi 1992; Hankey 1993b.  |
| 2 See Schoep 2010.   | 12 Wachsmann 1987; Panagiotopoulos 2006.   |
| 3 For an early Anatolian hieroglyphic scribal tradition, see Waal 2011, 32.  | 13 Stubbings 1963, 633.  |
| 4 Barrett 2009, 219.   | 14 After Vercoutter 1956, 55.  |
| 5 Koehl 2006.  | 15 Cline and Stannish 2011.  |
| 6 Matsas 1991; Matsas 1995.  | 16 Cline 1994, 128, E.1–2.   |
| 7 Broodbank 2013, 383.   | 17 Helck 1979, 97.   |
| 8 Niemeier and Niemeier 1998; Cline, Yasur-Landau, and Goshen 2011.  | 18 Niemeier and Niemeier 1998, 96.   |
| 9 Notable examples include a set of gold cups from a late sixteenth-century BC tholos at Vapheio, Laconia, and the wealth from the Shaft Graves at Mycenae, which date to the late seventeenth and sixteenth centuries BC. | 19 Kelder 2009.  |
| 10 Gestoso Singer 2009.  | 20 Parkinson and Schofield 1994.   |
|  | 21 For extensive discussion and excellent illustrations of boar tusk helmets, see Hixenbaugh, forthcoming, passim and esp. M1–M26. |
|  | 22 Parkinson and Schofield 1994.   |
|  | 23 Koehl 1999.   |
|  | 24 See Whitley et al. 2005–6, 14, with references.   |
|  | 25 See Cline 2014.   |