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RICH BEYOND THE DREAMS OF AVARIS: TELL EL-DAB'A AND THE AEGEAN WORLD - A GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED¹

. . . hundreds of ships of new cedar, filled with gold, lapis-lazuli, silver, turquoise and countless battle-axes of bronze, not to mention the moringa-oil, incense, fat, honey, *itrn-wood*, *šsndm-wood*, and all their valuable timber - all the good products of Retenu [Syria].²

THUS did the 17th Dynasty Theban king Kamose portray the rich, bustling, crowded harbour at Avaris during the reign of the Hyksos king Apophis, in the only surviving contemporary description of the Hyksos capital. Not long after Kamose's portrayal, however, the city of Avaris went up in flames, torched by the Egyptian army under Kamose's younger brother and successor, Pharaoh Ahmose I: the famed liberator of Egypt, conqueror of the hated Hyksos, and founder of the Egyptian 18th Dynasty. The city was destroyed by Ahmose during his eleventh year of rule or soon thereafter; he reigned c. 1550—1525 BC or c. 1539—1514 BC (according to the Egyptian high and low chronologies respectively).³ The vengeful Egyptians, bent on erasing all memory of the despised Asiatics, apparently destroyed much of the city and razed most of the buildings in Avaris, as they did with nearly all the Hyksos monuments

¹ I am grateful to J. L. Davis, P. Foss, D. Harris-Cline, S. W. Manning, J. D. Muhly, P. Rehak, R. Schindler, and J. Younger for reading and commenting upon earlier versions of this article. With respect to the title, apologies are offered to Maimonides and to Samuel Johnson (as recorded in J. Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (1791), entry for 4 Apr. 1781).

Abbreviations:

Bietak 1992 = M. Bietak, 'Minoan wall-paintings unearthed at ancient Avaris', *Egyptian Archaeology*, 2 (1992), 26-8.

Bietak 1994 = M. Bietak, Introduction and overview, in Bietak *et al.* 1994, 17—57.

Bietak 1995 = M. Bietak, 'Connections between Egypt and the Minoan world: new results from Tell el-Dab'a/Avaris', in Davies and Schofield, 19-28.

Bietak 1996 = M. Bietak, *Avaris: The Capital of the Hyksos. Recent Excavations at Tell el-Dab'a* (London, 1996).

Bietak 1997 = M. Bietak, 'The center of Hyksos rule: Avaris (Tell el-Dab'a)' in Oren 1997, 87-139.

Bietak and Marinatos 1995 = M. Bietak and N. Marinatos, 'The Minoan wall paintings from Avaris', *Agypten und Levante*, 5 (1995), 49-62.

Bietak *et al.* 1994 = M. Bietak, I. Hein, *et al.*, *Pharaonen und Fremde, Dynastien im Dunkel*. Exhibition catalogue, Rathaus, Vienna 8 Sept-23 Oct 1994 (Vienna, 1994).

Davies and Schofield 1995 = W. V. Davies and L. Schofield (eds), *Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant: Interconnections in the Second Millennium BC* (London, 1995).

Hardy and Renfrew 1990 = D. A. Hardy and A. C.

Renfrew (eds), *Thera and the Aegean World*, iii/3 (London, 1990).

Laffineur and Niemeier 1995 = R. Laffineur and W.-D. Niemeier (eds), *Politeia: Society and State in the Aegean Bronze Age* (Liege, 1995).

Oren 1997 = E. D. Oren (ed), *The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives*. University Museum Monograph 6. University Museum Symposium Series 8 (Philadelphia, 1997).

² Kamose Stele II, lines 13—5; translation following J. B. Pritchard (ed), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton, 1969), 554-5; L. Habachi, *The Second Stele of Kamose* (Gluckstadt, 1972), 37, 49; D. B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton, 1992), 120; id., 'Textual sources for the Hyksos period', in Oren 1997, 14.

³ Cf. W. C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt II: The Hyksos Period and the New Kingdom (1675-1080 BC)* (New York, 1959), 42; K. A. Kitchen, 'The basics of Egyptian chronology in relation to the bronze age', in P. Astrom (ed), *High, Middle or Low? (Acts of an International Colloquium on Absolute Chronology Held at the University of Gothenburg 20th-22nd August 1987)*, Pt. 1 (Göteborg, 1987), 52; N. Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 1992), 193; P. M. Warren, 'Minoan Crete and Pharaonic Egypt', in Davies and Schofield 1995, 4; J. M. Weinstein, 'Reflections on the chronology of Tell el-Dab'a', in Davies and Schofield 1995, 85; K. P. Foster and R. K. Ritner, 'Texts, storms, and the Thera eruption', *JNES* 55 (1996), 9-10; Bietak 1996, 81; D. O'Connor, 'The Hyksos period in Egypt', in Oren 1997, 45, 56.

throughout Egypt and the Nile Delta.⁴ An eyewitness account to the capture of Avaris is preserved in a text inscribed in a tomb at el-Kab in Upper Egypt. Here was buried an Egyptian sea captain, also named Ahmose, who recorded his participation in the campaign. He stated that the city was captured after a series of assaults by both land and water, and that a large amount of plunder was secured during the destruction of the city: 'Then Avaris was sacked and I carried off spoil from there . . .'.⁵

Excavations at the site of Tell el-Dab^ca in the Nile Delta, now generally accepted as ancient Avaris, have been ongoing during the past three decades. An Austrian team of archaeologists headed by Manfred Bietak, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Vienna, has revealed occupational remains from all periods of the ancient city.⁶ Bietak's recent publication *of Avaris: The Capital of the Hyksos. Recent Excavations at Tell el-Dab^ca* (London, 1996) describes most of the site's history, from its origins as a small settlement in the early 12th Dynasty of the Middle Kingdom Period, through the coming of the Canaanites in the 13th Dynasty and the subsequent establishment of the site as the capital city of the Hyksos, and culminating with the expulsion of the Hyksos and the rebuilding programme of the early 18th Dynasty Egyptians.

Originally presented in July 1992 as the inaugural lecture in the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Foundation Distinguished Lecture in Egyptology at the British Museum, the contents of this concise, elaborately illustrated volume were apparently updated and revised until virtually the moment before its publication in 1996. The discussion incorporates the results of the most recent excavation seasons (1993–5) and may be considered to supersede most, if not all, of the previous publications by Bietak and the members of his team. However, specialists will now want to supplement this general volume with a more technical article, which includes some useful digressions, originally given as a paper by Bietak at a seminar on the Hyksos held at the University of Pennsylvania from January to April 1992 and just published in a superb and welcome volume edited by Eliezer Oren.⁷

After the expulsion of the Hyksos by Ahmose, marked at much of Tell el-Dab^ca by Stratum D/2, large parts of the site seem to have remained abandoned for quite some time. However, at least one portion of the city seems to have been quickly resettled and rebuilt by the victorious Egyptians. The relevant early 18th Dynasty levels, referred to as Strata C/1-3 by Bietak and his team, have so far been found at Tell el-Dab^ca only in the citadel area known as 'Ezbet Helmi (Bietak's Area H/I-V). Here buildings with parallels to Ahmose's so-called 'northern' and

⁴ Cf. Hayes (n. 3), 11-39; Redford (n. 2), 115-16; M. Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilisation, ii: The Archaeological and Documentary Evidence* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1990), 352-5.

⁵ Cf. translations and discussions in Pritchard (n. 2), 233-4; Redford (n. 2), 128-9; Grimal (n. 3), 193-4; P. A. Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs* (London, 1994), 97.

⁶ David O'Connor has recently published a user-friendly map and concise accompanying description of the remains visible and/or excavated by Bietak at the site: 'Tell el-Dab^ca and its environs actually consists of three tells, or occupation mounds. The northeastern (and its possible outliers in the northwestern quadrant of the general region) is New Kingdom in date . . . a centrally located mound represents a substantial Twelfth Dynasty town, which expanded in size in the Thirteenth and Fifteenth Dynasties. Immediately to the southwest, another tell had some Twelfth Dynasty

occupation, but expanded greatly during the Thirteenth and the Fifteenth. This tell, on present evidence, housed the palace and associated structures of the Fifteenth Dynasty pharaohs (i.e., the Hyksos of the Fifteenth Dynasty)'; O'Connor (n. 3), 53 with figure 2.6.

⁷ Bietak 1997. The underlying data and accompanying illustrations contained in these two most recent publications by Bietak are substantially the same, but the text and discussions are somewhat different, apparently due in part to extensive editing of Bietak's contribution to Oren's volume by Stephen Harvey; cf. Bietak 1997, 129 n. 1. Observant readers of German will also note a similarity between these two publications and much of Bietak's contribution to the catalogue accompanying the Tell el-Dab^ca exhibition in Vienna (Bietak 1994). Cf. now also, in French, M. Bietak, 'Avaris: Tell-el Dab^ca', *Les Dossiers d'archéologie* 213 (1996), 16-23.

'southern' palaces at Deir el-Ballas in Upper Egypt were found.⁸ The city may have been used as a military base and harbour for Ahmose's continued expeditions against the remnants of the Hyksos in southern Syria-Palestine.⁹ Bietak suggests that the newly refurbished settlement, apparently no longer called Avaris, may have been renamed Peru-nefer ('happy journey') at this time.¹⁰ Peru-nefer is described in Egyptian texts as a famous 18th Dynasty harbour/dockyard but has never been definitively located; many other authorities consider Peru-nefer to have been situated at Memphis.¹¹ Tell el-Dab^ca subsequently expanded and flourished once again under the New Kingdom Egyptians and reached a pinnacle during the reign of Ramesses II in the 19th Dynasty, when it was known as Pi-Ramesses.¹² Kamose's Stele, with its description of Hyksos Avaris, was eventually removed and reused by Ramesses II as a foundation block under a colossal statue of himself near the entrance to the Great Hypostyle Hall in the Temple of Amen-Re at Karnak (modern Luxor), where it remained face down and lost to history until its discovery by archaeologists on 25 July 1954.¹³

Kamose's description of Hyksos Avaris as a rich and busy international port city does not come as a complete surprise.¹⁴ The Hyksos are known to have been in direct contact with both Syria-Palestine and Nubia: a fair number of Hyksos scarabs have been found in the Syria-Palestine region and a number of Hyksos objects have been found in Nubia.¹⁵ Perhaps most important as an indicator of direct contacts is a letter from the Hyksos ruler Apophis to a Nubian ruler, which was apparently intercepted by Kamose.¹⁶ Moreover, objects inscribed with the cartouche of the Hyksos king Khyan have been found as far afield as Crete, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia: a calcite/alabaster lid at Knossos on Crete, a piece of an obsidian jar at Hattusas in Anatolia, and a small granite weight in the shape of a lion which was acquired in Baghdad.¹⁷ Some 12 additional non-royal objects of possible Hyksos origin have also been found in the Bronze Age Aegean (see further discussion below). Numerous hypotheses concerning the international contacts and/or conquests of the Hyksos have been proffered over the past century or more; those concerned with the Aegean in particular have ranged from Persson's theories of Aegean aid to the native Egyptians in their quest to evict the Hyksos¹⁸ and Stubbings's theories of Hyksos fugitives in the Shaft Graves¹⁹ to Bernal's

⁸ Bietak 1996, 67-70, 72, figures 3, 55; id. 1997, 87, 115-17, 124, figures 4.3, 4.28; id. 1995, 20-1, figures 1-2.

⁹ Bietak 1996, 81.

¹⁰ Ibid. 82; id. 1997, 125.

¹¹ Cf. W. Helck in *LA* iv (1982), 990; D. G. Jeffrey, *Survey of Memphis I* (London, 1985), 48 and 107 nn. 385-8.

¹² Bietak 1996, 82-3; id., *Avaris and Pi-Ramesses* (Oxford, 1981), *passim*.

¹³ Habachi (n. 2), 16, 20.

¹⁴ Cf. J. S. Holladay, Jr., 'The eastern Nile Delta during the Hyksos and pre-Hyksos periods: toward a systemic/socio-economic understanding', in Oren 1997, 201, 209.

¹⁵ Cf. R. Giveon, 'Hyksos scarabs with names of kings and officials from Canaan', *Chronique d'Égypte*, 49 (1974), 222-33; J. M. Weinstein, 'The Egyptian empire in Palestine: a reassessment', *BASOR* 241 (1981), 8-10, fig. 2; Redford (n. 2), 113, 119; O'Connor (n. 3), 45, 62-3. Note, however, Redford 1997 (n. 2), 21: 'The Hyksos artifacts in Nubia attest to nothing more than trade via the oasis route.'

¹⁶ Kamose Stele II, 19-24; cf. Pritchard (n. 2), 555;

Habachi (n. 2), 39, 49; Grimal (n. 3), 191-2; Redford 1997 (n. 2), 14-15.

¹⁷ Cf. T. Deveria, 'Lettre à M. Auguste Mariette sur quelques monuments relatifs aux Hyq-Sos ou antérieurs à leur domination', *Revue archéologique*, 4 (1861), 256-9; H. Stock, 'Der Hyksos Chian in Bogazkoy', *MDOG* 94 (1963), 73-80; W. Stevenson Smith, *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East* (New Haven, 1965), 20-1, 28-9; R. M. Boehmer, *Die Kleinfunde von Bogazkoy* (Berlin, 1972), 214 (no. 2178), pl. 82; Redford (n. 2), 120; E. H. Cline, *Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea: International Trade and the Late Bronze Age Aegean* (Oxford, 1994), cat. no. 680, with full references; M. J. Mellink, 'New perspectives and initiatives in the Hyksos period', *Agypten und Levante*, 5 (1995), 85-9; C. Lilyquist, *Egyptian Stone Vases: Khian through Tuthmosis IV* (New York, 1995), 22, 46, figs. 12, 123; P. P. Betancourt, 'Relations between the Aegean and the Hyksos at the end of the middle bronze age', in Oren 1997, 429; Bietak 1997, 114.

¹⁸ A. W. Persson, *New Tombs at Dendra near Medea* (Lund, 1942), 178-96.

¹⁹ E. H. Stubbings, 'The rise of Mycenaean civilisation', in *CAH ii/i*. 633-7.

recent and controversial suggestion of a Hyksos occupation of Crete, Thera, and Mainland Greece.²⁰

Scholarly interest in Hyksos international connections was renewed and revitalized in 1992, when the discovery of 'Minoan' frescoes at Tell el-Dab^ca, tentatively hypothesized to have been painted by resident Minoan artists, perhaps for a Minoan princess, was first formally announced.²¹ The wall paintings, depicting bulls, bull-leapers, and labyrinths, among other motifs, created an instant sensation, for they portrayed scenes and spectacles which were more at home in the Bronze Age Aegean than in the Nile Delta of Hyksos Egypt. Without a doubt, these are the most sensational discoveries concerning Minoan Crete to have been made in the last decade, and have certainly been the most-discussed aspect of Minoan international relations during that time-span, with the identity of their creators, their precise meaning, and the very reason for their existence still matters of great debate.

Indeed, the number of articles which have appeared in response to each new iota of data released by the excavators is positively astounding. Papers given in the wake of announcements of new Dab^ca material include those presented at Bietak's Chronology conference in Schloss Haindorf/Langenlois in 1990,²² the British Museum conference in London in 1992,²³ the Metropolitan Museum of Art symposium in New York in 1993,²⁴ the Politeia conference in Heidelberg in 1994,²⁵ the German Egyptological conference at Krems in 1994,²⁶ the Techne conference in Philadelphia in 1996,²⁷ and now the Aegean and the Orient' conference in Cincinnati in 1997.²⁸ Nor does this include the additional articles published in other books and journals, such as the *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology*,²⁹ the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*,³⁰ and the *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*,³¹ and various papers read at the annual meetings of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA),³² the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR), and the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE). In short, a veritable 'cottage industry' of publications seems to have been spawned by the discoveries at Dab^ca, with a multitude of scholars spinning and weaving their own interpretations using the ever-increasing amount of material made available by the excavators.

Bietak and his colleagues have published promptly the ongoing saga of the frescoes, with at least one article or announcement appearing nearly every year since 1992. Now, with the publication of Bietak's new *Avaris* book,³³ the initial results and hypotheses are presented *in toto*. This is by no means the final excavation report, particularly since we are still lacking

²⁰ Bernal (n. 4), 320-408, with earlier bibliography.

²¹ Bietak 1992, 26-8.

²² Published in *Agypten und Levante*, 3 (1992).

²³ Published in Davies and Schofield 1995.

²⁴ Published in *Agypten und Levante*, 5 (1995).

²⁵ Published in Laffineur and Niemeier 1995.

²⁶ Published in *Agypten und Levante*, 6 (1996).

²⁷ R. Laffineur and P. P. Betancourt (eds), *Techne. Craftsmen, Craftswomen and Craftsmanship in the Aegean Bronze Age* (Liege, 1997).

²⁸ E. H. Cline and D. Harris-Cline, *The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium: Proceedings of the 50th Anniversary Symposium, University of Cincinnati, 18-20 April 1997* (Liege, 1998).

²⁹ e.g. O. Negbi, 'The Libyan landscape from Thera: a review of Aegean enterprises in the Late Minoan I A Period', *JMA* 7/1 (1994), 73-112; S. W. Manning, S. J. Monks, G. Nakou, and F. A. De Mita, Jr., 'The fatal shore, the long

years and the geographical unconscious: considerations of iconography, chronology, and trade in response to Negbi's 'The Libyan landscape from Thera: a review of Aegean enterprises overseas in the Late Minoan IA period', *JMA* 7/2 (1994), 219-35.

³⁰ e.g. Foster and Ritner (n. 3).

³¹ e.g. J. Aruz, 'Syrian seals and the evidence for cultural interaction between the Levant and Crete', in *CMS Beiheft* 5 (Mainz, 1995), 1-21.

³² e.g. M. C. Shaw, 'Bull and maze: a Minoan fresco from Egypt', *AJA* 98 (1994), 331 (abstract only); ead., 'A bull-leaping scene in a fresco from Mycenae: a new reconstruction', *AJA* 99 (1995), 343 (abstract only); cf. now ead., 'The bull-leaping fresco from below the Ramp House at Mycenae: a study in iconography and artistic transmission', *BSA* 91 (1996), 167-90.

³³ Bietak 1996.

many crucial details (e.g. dimensions for all fresco fragments and suggested reconstructions, technical reports regarding the plaster and pigments used, complete sectional drawings, full stratigraphical information, and so forth), but it is a comprehensive preliminary explanation and analysis readily accessible to both academic scholars and discerning lay readers. While only the final c. 35 pages of Bietak's book are specifically concerned with international trade contacts, and the 'Minoan' wall paintings found at Tell el-Dab^ca,³⁴ it is undoubtedly this section which will generate the most discussion among Aegean scholars in the near future, for the results and hypotheses presented there are in some cases dramatically different from those first proposed back in 1992. Most importantly for Aegean specialists, Bietak drops a rather startling bombshell: the 'Minoan' frescoes at Avaris are apparently to be connected only with the early 18th Dynasty Egyptian occupation, and not with the Hyksos period at all.³⁵

Thus the situation at Tell el-Dab^ca, particularly in regard to the 'Minoan' wall paintings and their implications for connections between the Aegean and Egypt, has changed dramatically over the past five years. As a result of these changes, and the myriad publications which have appeared during this time, a goodly number of scholars, students, and laypeople now find themselves confused and perplexed, unsure of what they should teach, read, write, or believe. It is in this context, and to those people, that the following brief review and synopsis is offered. As Maimonides once wrote,

I do not presume to think that this treatise settles every doubt in the minds of those who understand it, but I maintain that it settles the greater part of their difficulties . . . my sole object in planning to write [this] . . . was to make the contents . . . intelligible to everybody. In this work . . . I address those who have studied . . . and have acquired sound knowledge, and who . . . are [still] perplexed and bewildered . . .³⁶

CHANGING RESULTS AT TELL EL-DAB^CA

The first fragments of 'Minoan' wall paintings found at Tell el-Dab^ca, in the citadel area known as 'Ezbet Helmi, were originally hypothesized by Bietak to have come from a palatial building in Area H/I, built on top of a monumental mudbrick platform, and were dated to the late Hyksos Period - that is, from approximately the period when Avaris was the rich and busy international port city described by Kamose in his Stele.³⁷ It was thought that most of the wall paintings were destroyed during the initial sack and partial demolition of the building at the end of the Hyksos period, which explained why they were in a fragmentary condition when discovered. Bietak reported that these first fragments were not found *in situ* on the walls of the building but rather in a sealed stratum within a garden to the north, underlying a layer dated to the early 18th Dynasty.³⁸

Additional excavation seasons in 1993, 1994, and 1995 added more material to the ongoing discussion and introduced new twists. A brief report appearing in *Egyptian Archaeology* mentioned that more 'Minoan' frescoes and stucco reliefs had been discovered elsewhere in the 'Ezbet Helmi region of Tell el-Dab^ca during the excavation season of 1994.³⁹ At least some of these were originally reported as having been found 'around the entranceway' to a large (80 m) building with stone column bases still *in situ*, dated to the early 18th Dynasty. Bietak then

³⁴ Ibid. 55-89.

³⁷

Bietak 1992, 26-8.

³⁵ Ibid. 76.

³⁸

Ibid.

³⁶ M. Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, translated by M. Friedlander (New York, 1956), 2, 5.

³⁹ Anon., 'Digging diary 1993-1994', *Egyptian Archaeology*, 5 (1994), 10.

elaborated upon the earlier brief citation, to report that 'Minoan' frescoes and stucco reliefs were in fact found in not one, but two, additional places within the 'Ezbet Helmi sector of Dab^ca: Areas H/II and H/III, located some 150 m to the south-east of Area H/I.⁴⁰ Thus, by late 1995, 'Minoan' frescoes had been reported from three different areas of 'Ezbet Helmi at Tell el-Dab^ca; and the suggested dates for their construction were undergoing serious revisions. These will be discussed separately below.

AREA H/I

Bietak's earliest publications of the 'Minoan' fresco fragments in Area H/I indicated that they had been found in late Hyksos contexts,⁴¹ and virtually all subsequent discussions by other scholars have thus centred primarily around contacts between Hyksos Egypt and Minoan Crete.⁴² The identity of the artists who produced these frescoes and reliefs was by no means clear, but scholarly opinion leaned heavily towards Minoan, or at least Minoan-inspired, creators.⁴³

Following the 1993 excavation season, Bietak *et al.* reported that some of the 'Minoan' paintings in Area H/I seemed to have survived intact on the walls of the palatial building, built on top of the monumental mudbrick platform, for longer than originally hypothesized and had been removed only when the remainder of the building was demolished some time after the first half of the 18th Dynasty.⁴⁴ Bietak and Marinatos described again the findspots of these fragments in Area H/I, but enlarged the chronological scope to include the possibility that the building dated 'either to the end of the Hyksos period or the beginning of the 18th Dynasty'.⁴⁵ They noted as well, in a 'Post Script' apparently added at the last minute before publication,⁴⁶ that the 1994 and 1995 excavations in Area H/I suggested that the platform, and therefore the building on top of it and the fresco fragments, might date from 'the very beginning of the 18th Dynasty'.

Now, Bietak has announced that 'the results of further excavation have forced a reconsideration'.⁴⁷ He states:

At first, it seemed certain that the platform dated to the late Hyksos period because walls of an early 18th Dynasty settlement run against the eroded northern ramp attached to it. However . . . the platform cuts into the fortification wall of late Hyksos times and covers a garden of the same period. It is logical to assume, therefore, that it can date only to the very end of this period. Another important observation is that the platform has the same orientation as the palatial compound H/II-III of the early 18th Dynasty, while it is oblique to the orientation of the late Hyksos period stratum. The only solution for this conflicting evidence is to date the platform to the years immediately after the fall of Avaris and assume it was in official use for only a short time.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ Bietak 1995, 23, 26; cf. now id. 1996, fig. 55.

⁴¹ e.g. Bietak 1992, 26-8.

⁴² Cf. V Hankey, 'Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant', *Egyptian Archaeology*, 3 (1993), 27-9; ead., 'A Theban "battle axe"', *Minerva*, 4/3 (1993), 13-14; Negbi (n. 29), 73-112; Shaw 1994 (n. 32), 331; N. Marinatos, 'On the rhetoric of Egyptian and Minoan art', in P. J. Holliday (ed.), *Narrative and Event in Ancient Art* (Cambridge, 1993), 74-87; ead., 'The "export" significance of Minoan bull hunting and bull leaping scenes', *Ägypten und Levante*, 4 (1994), 89-93; ead., 'Formalism and gender roles: a comparison of Minoan and Egyptian art', in Laffineur and Niemeier 1995, 577-85; ead., 'Divine kingship in Minoan Crete', in P. Rehak (ed.), *The Role of the Ruler in the Prehistoric Aegean* (Liege, 1995), 37-48; Warren (n. 3), 4-5; E. H. Cline, 'Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor: Minoans and

Mycenaeans abroad', in Laffineur and Niemeier 1995, 265-83.

⁴³ Cf. Bietak 1992, 26-8; id. 1995, 23-6; Hankey, *Egyptian Archaeology* (n. 42), 29; ead., *Minerva* (n. 42), 13-14; Negbi (n. 29), 80-1, 87-8; Cline (n. 42), 265-70; Warren (n. 3), 4-5; and various articles by Marinatos (n. 42).

⁴⁴ M. Bietak, J. Dörner, I. Hein, and P. János, 'Neue Grabungsergebnisse aus Tell el-Dab^ca und 'Ezbet Helmi im östlichen Nildelta 1989-1991', *Ägypten und Levante*, 4 (1994), 44-5; cf. also Anonymous, 'Digging diary 1992-1993', *Egyptian Archaeology*, 3 (1993), 9; Bietak 1995, 20-3.

⁴⁵ Bietak and Marinatos 1995, 49.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 62.

⁴⁷ Bietak 1996, 68.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* Cf. now also id. 1997, 117.

Thus, the platform and paintings in Area H/I are now all hypothesized to date from the early 18th Dynasty, when the city was rebuilt and reoccupied by the victorious Egyptians led by Ahmose, and not to the Hyksos period after all.⁴⁹

As mentioned, these 'Minoan' paintings were not discovered in situ within Area H/I, which has contributed to the confusion as to their date, but were discovered in dumps of debris found to the north and east of the monumental platform.⁵⁰ There were literally thousands of fragments found, of both wall paintings and stucco reliefs, which are now in the process of being painstakingly restored and reconstructed by gifted conservators and artists.

Within the dump to the north, most important are fragments from a large scene with two registers, showing bulls and bull-leapers cavorting in the foreground, with a maze or labyrinth pattern in the background, and a half-rossette triglyph frieze at the base.⁵¹ The scene bears a resemblance to frescoes at Knossos on Crete, as many previous scholars have noted. Bietak now identifies it specifically as a 'representation of the bull-leaping ground of the palace of Knossos, perhaps a replica of a Knossian painting which is no longer preserved', and suggests that the arena depicted might be specifically identified as the West Court at Knossos.⁵² The scene also recalls/foreshadows the myth of 'Theseus and the Minotaur' and may indicate that the story could be nearly 1,000 years older than previously thought.⁵³

Within the dump to the east of the platform, fragments from other paintings were found, including a floor-painting with an oblique maze-pattern in blue.⁵⁴ Another set of fragments depicts acrobats; one with a plumed head-dress tumbling beside a palm tree has a possible parallel with the African' in the Theran wall paintings.⁵⁵ Other fragments show landscapes, both river and mountain scenes; hunting scenes with dogs; lions and leopards in flying gallop chasing mountain goats and fallow deer; a nearly life-size bearded male head; and another figure identified (for reasons not specified) as a priest or dignitary pictured in front of an architectural background.⁵⁶

The excavation team also discovered stucco fragments which depict half-life-size bulls in relief within Area H/I. These were found to one side of a ramp which led into the palatial platform/building from the north.⁵⁷ Their original location may well have been on one or both sides of the ramp, much like the stucco relief-bulls at the northern entrance to the palace of Knossos.⁵⁸

AREA H/II

As noted, more 'Minoan' frescoes and relief stucco were first discovered in additional areas at Tell el-Dab^ca during the excavation season of 1994.⁵⁹ One of these was Area H/II, located some 150 m to the south-east of Area H/I.⁶⁰

According to the earlier publications by Bietak and his team,⁶¹ Area H/II contained a

⁴⁹ Bietak 1996, 72.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 73-4, fig. 57, pl. 33 a-b.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 73, colour pls. 3 a-b, 4, 5, 6 a-b.

⁵² *Ibid.* 74.

Ibid.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 73; Cline (n. 17), 32, 34; *id.* (n. 42), 268-9.

⁵⁴ Bietak 1996, 75, colour pl. 6 c.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 75, colour pl. 6 d; cf. N. Marinatos, 'The "African" of Thera reconsidered', *OpAth* 17 (1988), 137-41.

⁵⁶ Bietak 1996, 75, colour pls. 7 a-d, 8 a-b; cf. previously Bietak *et al.* (n. 40), 49-51, pls. 17 a, 19 a; Bietak in Bietak *et*

al. 1994, 195 (no. 219); Marinatos in Bietak *et al.* 1994, 202 (no. 126), 203 (no. 227), 205 (no. 230), with colour plate.

⁵⁷ Bietak 1996, 74-5, fig. 57.

75.

⁵⁹ Anon. (n. 39), 10.

⁶⁰ Bietak 1996, fig. 55.

⁶¹ Bietak 1995, 23, 26; cf. also Bietak and Marinatos 1995, 49; Warren (n. 3), 4; P. Janosi, 'Die stratigraphische Position und Verteilung der minoischen Wandfragmente in den Grabungsplätzen H/I und H/IV von Tell el-Dab^ca', *Agypten und Levante*, 5 (1995), 63-71.

major building complex with two distinct phases: a palace dating to the late Hyksos period, replaced in turn by an early 18th Dynasty building possibly constructed by Ahmose. Now Bietak reports that the 18th Dynasty remains appear to be from the magazine (storage) area of a palace discovered to the east in Area H/III, and that these 18th Dynasty remains in both Areas H/II and H/III may all be part of a single massive palatial building; one which parallels the so-called 'northern palace' of Ahmose at Deir el-Ballas.⁶² The many finds of imported vessels in Area H/II apparently include 'the first finds of imported pottery of MM III and LM I A date within the citadel, unfortunately from secondary contexts'.⁶³

In addition to unspecified frescoes,⁶⁴ Bietak notes that 'another stucco relief . . . shows a limb of a life-size figure with white skin against a red background with some plants. This piece is reminiscent of the so-called "Prince of the Lilies" from Knossos'.⁶⁵ The fresco fragments found in this area, like those in Area H/I, were originally reported as dating 'either to the late Hyksos period or to the early 18th Dynasty'.⁶⁶ However, they are now redated by Bietak to 'the beginning of the 18th Dynasty after the fall of Avaris (after c. 1530 BC)'.⁶⁷

AREA H/III

Area H/III is located some 150 m to the southeast of Area H/I and just to the north of Area H/II.⁶⁸ While also containing two levels, dating to the late Hyksos and early 18th Dynasty periods respectively, it was originally reported that this Area had yielded an 18th Dynasty enclosure wall with 'Minoan' wallpaintings 'on both sides of the wall and concentrating around a portal'.⁶⁹ Bietak and Marinatos stated firmly that: 'since these frescoes were found *in situ*, an early 18th Dynasty date is clear'.⁷⁰ However, they noted also that, in addition, a building of the Hyksos period was found in a stratum below this 18th Dynasty enclosure wall, and lime plaster typical of Minoan wall paintings, similar to that found in Area H/I, was discovered in the preserved lower-most part of the facade of this Hyksos building. They thus ultimately concluded that: 'this evidence supports the stratigraphical analysis . . . that Minoan wall paintings existed in Avaris both during the late Hyksos period and the early 18th Dynasty' and stated again: 'In summary, the Minoan wall paintings date to two periods: the late Hyksos period and the early 18th Dynasty'.⁷¹

Now, Bietak reports that 'from Area H/III—from around a doorway with a portico in an undisputed early 18th Dynasty context—we have decorative paintings with an ivy leaf- and loop-pattern. For the loop there is a good parallel from the palace of Phaistos'.⁷² Elsewhere, this doorway is described as 'monumental',⁷³ although no further description of the frescoes is given.⁷⁴ Again, the frescoes in Area H/III are now also redated by Bietak to 'the beginning of the 18th Dynasty after the fall of Avaris (after c. 1530 BC)'.⁷⁵

⁶² Bietak 1996, 70.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 72.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 75.

⁶⁶ Bietak and Marinatos 1995, 49.

⁶⁷ Bietak 1996, 76.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, fig. 55.

⁶⁹ Bietak and Marinatos 1995, 49.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Bietak 1996, 75. S. W. Manning, 'From process to people: *longue durée* to history', in Cline and Harris-Cline (n. 28), 318-19, believes that the best Aegean comparisons for the ivy decoration are from the LM I B period onwards, rather than the LM I A period, as per Bietak.

⁷³ Bietak 1996, 72.

⁷⁴ But cf. Bietak in Bietak *et al.* 1994, 52, fig. 39.

⁷⁵ Bietak 1996, 76.

'MINOAN' AND/OR 'MINOANIZING' OBJECTS AT TELL EL-DAB^CA

Until Bietak's new volume,⁷⁶ only two artefacts identified as 'Minoan' imports had been reported from stratified contexts at Tell el-Dab^Ca, and the lack of such imports was seen, by the present author at least,⁷⁷ to be a stumbling-block to Bietak's hypothesis of Minoans residing at Hyksos Avaris. Moreover, both of these artefacts were discovered in 13th Dynasty deposits within the palace compound, in contexts dating to a period immediately prior to the establishment of Dab^Ca as the Hyksos capital city.⁷⁸ These two objects, a fragmentary Kamares Ware cup discovered in 1988 and a gold pendant with two antithetical animals (probably dogs), were originally published by Walberg.⁷⁹ There is also a sherd of 'Post-Kamares' (MM III A/B) ware, found within the same 13th Dynasty palace compound, but unfortunately within a Ramesside tree-pit and therefore unstratified.⁸⁰

Recent papers by MacGillivray and Aruz have discussed and updated the two stratified 'Minoan' imports mentioned above, with substantial implications.⁸¹ MacGillivray's discussion⁸² now refines the identification of the four Minoan sherds discovered in the 13th Dynasty palatial context at Dab^Ca (Area F/I within Stratum d/I).⁸³ Previously identified by Walberg simply as 'Classical Kamares' ware (MM II A-II B—III A),⁸⁴ MacGillivray now suggests that they are specifically from a 'Rounded Cup of Type 6', otherwise known as a 'wavy-line cup', manufactured in north-central Crete (near Knossos) during the MM II B period.⁸⁵ The sherds thus provide further support for a chronological synchronism between the late Old Palace period in Crete and the early 13th Dynasty in Egypt.

On the other hand, Aruz has now called into question the suggested Aegean origin of the other stratified 'Minoan' artefact found in a 13th Dynasty context at Dab^Ca.⁸⁶ This, the gold pendant with antithetical animals, was found in a plundered tomb (Palace Tomb F/I—p/17—no. 14) within the same general palatial context (Area F/I within Stratum d/I) as the above Kamares ware sherds.⁸⁷ Previously identified by Walberg as being of Minoan manufacture and related to pendants found at Mallia and in the so-called Aegina treasure,⁸⁸ Aruz has now reidentified the pendant at Dab^Ca as 'a Canaanite piece, made either locally at Tell el-Dab^Ca itself or in the Levant, by a craftsman versed in the Syrian animal style'.⁸⁹ Other scholars agree that she may well be correct.⁹⁰ Bietak, however, continues to refer to this piece in his *Avaris* book as 'a Minoan pendant' and does not comment there upon Aruz's reidentification,⁹¹ although his contribution to Oren's volume refers to the pendant more

⁷⁶ Bietak 1996.

⁷⁷ Cline (n. 17), 34; id. (n. 42), 269.

⁷⁸ Bietak 1996, 21-36.

⁷⁹ G. Walberg, 'A gold pendant from Tell el-Dab^Ca', *Agypten und Levante*, 2 (1991), 111-12; ead., 'The finds at Tell el-Dab^Ca and Middle Minoan chronology', *Agypten und Levante*, 2 (1991), 115-18 (this article is also reproduced unchanged and with the same title in *Agypten und Levante*, 3 (1992), 157-9); Warren (n. 3), 3; Bietak 1995, 19-20, pl. 14 I; id. 1997, 104.

⁸⁰ Walberg, 'Middle Minoan chronology' (n. 79), 117; M. Bietak, 'Eine Palastanlage aus der Zeit des späten Mittleren Reiches und andere Forschungsergebnisse aus dem östlichen Nildelta (Tell el-Dab^Ca 1979-1984)', *Anzeiger der Philosophisch-historischen Klasse der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 121 (1984), 330, fig. 7; id. 1995, 19; id. 1996, 29; id. 1997, 104.

⁸¹ J. A. MacGillivray, 'A Minoan cup at Tell el-Dab^Ca',

Agypten und Levante, 5 (1995), 81-84; J. Aruz, 'Imagery and interconnections', *Agypten und Levante*, 5 (1995), 33-48.

⁸² MacGillivray (n. 81), 81-4.

⁸³ Cf. now Bietak 1996, 29, colour pl. 1 a.

⁸⁴ Walberg, 'Middle Minoan chronology' (n. 79), 115-18.

⁸⁵ MacGillivray (n. 81), 81-12.

⁸⁶ Aruz (n. 81), 44-6.

⁸⁷ Cf. now Bietak 1996, 29, colour pl. 1 b and cover photograph.

⁸⁸ Walberg, 'A gold pendant...' (n. 79), m-12.

⁸⁹ Aruz (n. 81), 46.

⁹⁰ e.g. P. Rehak, pers. comm., 15 January 1997; see now comments by S. P. Morris, 'Daidalos and Kothar: the future of their relationship', in Cline and Harris-Cline (n. 28), 282-4.

⁹¹ Bietak 1996, 29.

tentatively as a 'possible Aegean gold pendant' and acknowledges Aruz's article in a footnote.⁹²

Bietak also calls attention to a magnificent bronze dagger which has tangential interlocked spirals reminiscent of Minoan motifs incised on the blade.⁹³ The dagger was found in another 13th Dynasty palace tomb at Dab^ca (F/I-m/18-no.3). It was, however, most likely manufactured in coastal Syria, as Bietak admits;⁹⁴ the design probably reflects Aegean influence on Canaanite art rather than actual Aegean manufacture. On the other hand, a 'bundle of bronze arrowheads, originally carried in a net', which were found beside a wall in the 18th Dynasty palatial compound in Area H/III, are reportedly of 'Late Helladic type'.⁹⁵ These may be evidence for Aegean soldiers at Dab^ca, as Bietak suggests, either resident or visiting, or even for Aegean mercenaries; but even if they are of Aegean manufacture, they could simply be evidence for Aegean weaponry carried by non-Aegean personnel.

Most potentially important for the discussion of Bronze Age interconnections are the newly reported finds of MM III and LM I A imported pottery at Dab^ca, as mentioned above. These are now briefly described by Bietak as having been found within the 18th Dynasty citadel in Area H/II, albeit in secondary contexts.⁹⁶ Bietak notes that 'of particular interest are sherds of a jug or amphoriskos with a painted representation of a leopard in flying gallop chasing an ungulate. This motif has parallels on Middle Cycladic pottery'.⁹⁷ Perhaps most intriguing, Bietak also mentions in passing 'locally made funnel-shaped red-polished LM IA rhyta in both full and small scale [which] can be taken as an indication of the presence of Minoans in the citadel'.⁹⁸ The pieces have apparently been identified by Stefan Hiller and Vronwy Hankey,⁹⁹ but unfortunately little other information is yet available. When these pieces are published in full, they may contribute significant support to Bietak's hypothesis of resident Minoans at Avaris, which currently remains plausible but unproven for lack of compelling evidence. It should be pointed out, however, that locally-produced Minoan shapes do not necessarily indicate the presence of Minoans at the site.

CONSIDERATIONS AND RAMIFICATIONS OF THE NEW DATA

With regard to the dating of the 'Minoan' frescoes discovered at Dab^ca, and the changes necessitated by ensuing seasons of excavation following the original announcement in 1992, one can easily trace the modifications through Bietak's publications. At first, the wall paintings were linked only to the Hyksos period;¹⁰⁰ then, they were reported as possibly connected with both the Hyksos and early 18th Dynasty periods;¹⁰¹ now, they are linked only to the early 18th Dynasty period, with no Hyksos connections whatsoever.¹⁰²

⁹² Bietak 1997, 104 and n. 35 (although Aruz is misspelt).

⁹³ Bietak 1996, 26, 29, fig. 22. 8, pl. 11 a; previously id., 'Der Friedhof in einem Palastgarten aus der Zeit des späten Mittleren Reiches und andere Forschungsergebnisse aus dem östlichen Nildelta (Tell el-Dab^ca 1984-1987)', *Ägypten und Levante*, 2 (1991), 67, fig. 15, pls. 22 c, 23 b.

⁹⁴ Bietak 1995, 20, pl. 14. 2.

⁹⁵ Bietak 1996, 82; cf. Schwab in Bietak *et al.* 1994, 256 (no. 347). Bietak 1997, 117 states: 'In H/III, bags of arrowheads, most likely of Late Helladic typology of bronze or copper were found lying beside a large palace wall'.

⁹⁶ Bietak 1996, 70.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 70, 72; cf. also Hein in Bietak *et al.* 1994, 261 (no. 358); R- L. N. Barber, *The Cyclades in the Bronze Age* (London, 1987), 153, fig. 111.

⁹⁸ Bietak 1996, 72; id. 1997, 117. Ibid. 87 n. 104.

Bietak 1992, 26-8.

¹⁰¹ Bietak *et al.* (n. 44), 44-5; Bietak 1995, 20-3; Bietak and Marinatos 1995, 49, 62.

¹⁰² Bietak 1996, 76.

If Bietak's new assumption is correct, 'that not only the paintings in area H/III and H/II but also those from the secondary dumps north of the platform H/I date to the beginning of the 18th Dynasty after the fall of Avaris (after c. 1530 BC)',¹⁰³ much of the emphasis which had been previously placed on Hyksos-Minoan contacts will now have to be scuttled, or at least modified, in favour of hypotheses concerning Egyptian-Minoan contacts. Certainly Bietak's recurrent suggestion that the frescoes at Dab^ca were painted at the instigation of Minoan expatriates, or even a Minoan princess, living in Avaris during the Hyksos period,¹⁰⁴ will have to be amended. Indeed, Bietak's proposed 'dynastic marriage' between the Minoan princess and a Hyksos ruler has already been revised, and is now an arranged marriage linking Minoan Crete and early 18th Dynasty Egypt.¹⁰⁵ In other words, the 'Minoan princess' has shifted her quarters, retinue, and dowry from Hyksos Avaris to Egyptian Avaris, a move which is short in distance and time, but long on implications and ramifications.

Bietak's decision to redate the relevant strata (C/1—3) at Tell el-Dab^ca is rather sudden, to say the least. His dramatic redating is by no means universally accepted yet, however, and indeed has provoked mutterings in certain quarters by those wishing to see the raw data in order to decide for themselves. Since it is impossible to judge whether Bietak's redating is correct without access to sectional drawings and full stratigraphical data, and since it is also quite conceivable that future excavation seasons at Dab^ca will necessitate yet additional revisions and that the Hyksos will once again be drawn into the equation, the discussions below will consider separately both the Hyksos and the early 18th Dynasty Egyptian connections with the Bronze Age Aegean.

NATIONALITY OF THE DAB^CA ARTISTS

Bietak now states categorically that 'the style and execution of the paintings are extraordinary . . . There is no doubt that Minoan artists were employed'.¹⁰⁶ His remarks are based upon the observation that the same techniques were used to construct the frescoes at Dab^ca as at Knossos and elsewhere in the Minoan world, including the use of lime (rather than mud or gypsum) plaster, coloured backgrounds, string lines for guides, the execution of the paintings while the plaster was still wet, and the high quality of the plaster and the style of painting.¹⁰⁷ These same techniques and qualities are also found elsewhere in the Eastern Mediterranean region at approximately this same time, namely at Tell Kabri in Israel and at Alalakh and perhaps Qatna in Syria; in each instance it is hypothesized (but remains unproved) that the paintings were done by Minoan artists.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Bietak 1992, 28; id. 1995, 26; Bietak *et al.* (n. 44), 58; Bietak and Marinatos 1995, 61; Hankey, *Egyptian Archaeology* (n. 42), 29; ead., *Minerva* (n. 42), 13-4; Cline (n. 42), 268-9, 277-8; M. C. Shaw, 'Bull leaping frescoes at Knossos and their influence on the Tell el-Dab^ca murals', *Agypten und Levante*, 5 (1995), no.; also comments by M. H. Wiener in the discussion section *ibid.* 131—2

¹⁰⁵ Bietak 1996, 80. There are certainly a number of later 18th and 19th Dynasty Egyptian Pharaohs who married foreign princesses, primarily to cement diplomatic bonds or a treaty with a foreign power. Cf. Amarna Letters EA 1-5, 17, 19-22, 24-5, 31-2; A. R. Schulman, 'Diplomatic marriage in the Egyptian New Kingdom', *JNES* 38 (1979), 177-93; W. L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore, 1992), 1-3, 6-11, 41-84, 101-3; E. H. Cline, Amenhotep III, the Aegean and Anatolia, in D. B. O'Connor and E. H. Cline (eds), *Amenhotep III: Perspectives on his Reign* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1998), 248; E. Haider, 'Menschenhandel

zwischen dem ägyptischen Hof und der minoisch-mykenischen Welt?', *Agypten und Levante*, 6 (1996), 149-56.

¹⁰⁶ Bietak 1996, 75.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 75-6, fig. 60. See now S. Hiller, 'Zur Rezeption ägyptischer Motive in der Minoischen Freskenkunst', *Agypten und Levante*, 6 (1996), 83-105; now also P. Rehak, 'Interconnections between the Aegean and the Orient in the second millennium BC', *AJA* 101 (1997), 401.

¹⁰⁸ W.-D. Niemeier, 'New archaeological evidence for a 17th century date of the 'Minoan eruption' from Palestine (Tel Kabri, Western Galilee)', in Hardy and Renfrew 1990, 120-6; id., 'Minoan artisans travelling overseas', in R. Laffineur and L. Basch (eds), *Thalassa: L'Égée préhistorique et la mer* (Liege, 1991), 189-210; id., 'Tel Kabri: Aegean fresco paintings in a Canaanite palace', in S. Gitin (ed.), *Recent Excavations in Israel: A View to the West* (Dubuque, Iowa, 1995), 1-15; Cline (n. 42); Bietak 1996, 78-9; W.-D. and B. Niemeier, 'Minoan frescoes in the Eastern Mediterranean', in Cline and Harris-Cline (n. 28), 69-98.

Despite Bietak's confident assertion, it remains a debated point who actually painted the frescoes at Dab^ca. (Hence the presence throughout this article of quotation marks around the word 'Minoan' when the phrases "'Minoan' paintings' or "'Minoan' frescoes' are used.¹⁰⁹) While Bietak and Marinatos state that 'the themes, technique and style of the paintings are undoubtedly Minoan',¹¹⁰ Shaw opines that 'the artists of these works were not Minoans, unless Egyptianized Minoans',¹¹¹ and suggests further that although 'the painters had been trained in Crete . . . their work at Avaris falls short of being purely and genuinely Minoan'.¹¹² Others believe that the execution and style/manner of the frescoes is non-Aegean, and point to a number of tell-tale features including subtle misrepresentations of the costumes and poses of the bull-leapers.¹¹³ It should also be noted that many of the designs and motifs could easily have reached Egypt *via* imported Aegean textiles as early as the Middle Minoan/Middle Kingdom periods, prior even to the Hyksos infiltration of Egypt.¹¹⁴

In particular, the landscape scenes depicted in these frescoes are the subject of much discussion—e.g. whether they are Delta scenes depicted by Minoan artists, or Minoan scenes depicted by either Minoan, Hyksos, or Egyptian artists using local Egyptian flora and fauna, or some other combination entirely. The floral scenes at Tell el-Dab^ca, for example, are prime examples of the rather international nature of some of the frescoes. These have already been compared many times to wall paintings in the Aegean, but Bietak and Marinatos point out that those at Tell el-Dab^ca are thus far lacking the 'crocuses' typical of Minoan scenes.¹¹⁵ This, however, may be a temporary situation, for a related argument that the Dab^ca paintings were lacking typical Minoan 'craggy rocks' may now be mooted by Bietak's new announcement of 'a representation of Cretan craggy mountains' among the fragments found in Area H/I.¹¹⁶

Before Bietak's redating of the wall paintings,¹¹⁷ back when they were still associated with the Hyksos occupation of Avaris, Shaw suggested that perhaps 'the Hyksos rulers hired itinerant artists'.¹¹⁸ It is, of course, entirely possible that freelance artisans (Minoan or otherwise) would have been available for hire during both the late Hyksos and early 18th Dynasty periods; similar scenarios involving itinerant artisans have been envisaged at both Kabri in Israel and Alalakh in Syria.¹¹⁹ It is even possible that Minoans could have been resident in Avaris at either or both times, considering Avaris's continuous function as a port city and gateway to Egypt proper. What is unclear, and may remain forever obscure, is whether any such foreign artisans would indeed have been working freelance or if they could have been sent (either temporarily or permanently) in a form of 'gift exchange' as practised by numerous kings in Egypt, the Near East, and possibly the Bronze Age Aegean as well.¹²⁰ Elaborating upon Bietak's hypothesis of a Minoan princess,¹²¹ and having her arrive at Avaris

¹⁰⁹ Knapp, in Cline and Harris-Cline (n. 28), 206, pleads for the abandonment of the term 'Minoan' in connection with these paintings at Avaris.

¹¹⁰ Bietak and Marinatos 1995, 60.

¹¹¹ Shaw (n. 104), 94.

¹¹² *Ibid.* no.

¹¹³ See now Rehak (n. 107), 401.

¹¹⁴ Cf. H. J. Kantor, *The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium BC* (Bloomington, IN, 1947), 29-30, 78; M. C. Shaw, 'Ceiling patterns from the tomb of Hepzefa'. *AJA* 74 (1970), 28; E. T. Vermeule, 'Mycenaean drawing, Amarna, and Egyptian ostraka', in W. K. Simpson and W. M. Davis (eds), *Studies in Ancient Egypt, the Aegean, and the Sudan* (Boston, 1981), 194-5, 197-8; E. J. W. Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles: The Development of Cloth in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages* (Princeton, 1991), 311-83; S.

Nishimoto, 'The ceiling paintings of the harem rooms at the palace of Malqata', *GM* 127 (1992), 69-80; Cline (n. 42), 270.

¹¹⁵ Bietak and Marinatos 1995, 57, 60.

¹¹⁶ Bietak 1996, 75; cf. also *id.* 1995, 23-4, 26; Warren (n. 3), 4; and the detailed discussion by L. Morgan, 'Minoan painting and Egypt: the case of Tell el-Dab^ca', in Davies and Schofield 1995, 29-53.

¹¹⁷ Bietak 1996, 76.

¹¹⁸ Shaw (n. 104), 112.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Niemeier 1991 (n. 108); Cline (n. 42), 265-87.

¹²⁰ Cf. E. H. Cline, "'My brother, my son': rulership and trade between the LBA Aegean, Egypt and the Near East', in P. Rehak (ed.), *The Role of the Ruler in the Prehistoric Aegean* (Liege, 1995), 143-50.

¹²¹ Bietak 1996, 79-80. *id.* 1997, 124.

complete with Cretan artisans in her entourage ready to create a Delta palace 'fit for a Keftiu queen', is a lovely image, but is unlikely ever to be proven without the discovery of supporting textual evidence.

HYKSOS CONTACTS WITH THE BRONZE AGE AEGEAN

It is now generally accepted that the Syria-Lebanon region was the original home of the Hyksos.¹²² Thus it is of interest to note that there are numerous representations of bulls, acrobats, and even of bull-leaping in this region, albeit some quite possibly of Minoan inspiration.¹²³ However, apart from the recently discovered wall paintings and stucco reliefs at Tell el-Dab^ca, only one depiction of a bull and no portrayals of either acrobats or bull-leapers have yet been found in the Hyksos iconographical repertoire within Egypt and the Delta. The sole occurrence is a rendering of a bull found on an eighteenth-century BC cylinder seal (reg. no. 2995) discovered at Tell el-Dab^ca itself.¹²⁴ It was found in the northern wing of the early 13th Dynasty palace, within the same area (Area F/I within Stratum d/i) as the Kamares ware sherds and gold pendant discussed above. Porada noted that the bull on this seal is associated with a representation of the northern Syrian weather god (Baal Zephon) and stated that 'the weather god is associated with the bull in Anatolian iconography . . . The Syrian weather god Baal is [also] said to have had the bull as his symbol . . .'.¹²⁵

The relative lack of other Hyksos representations of bulls and bull-leapers may be an indication that the frescoes at Dab^ca, if any are to be ultimately dated to the Hyksos period, could very well have been painted at the instigation of Minoan expatriates, or even a Minoan princess, living in Avaris during the Hyksos period, as Bietak has suggested several times. As noted above, such scenes and techniques of wall-painting are well known on Minoan Crete, particularly at Knossos. Similar scenes are also found at Mycenae on mainland Greece, as Shaw points out,¹²⁶ although the relevant wall-painting(s) there may be a bit later in date.¹²⁷ On the other hand, the Hyksos are known to have adopted much of Egyptian culture as they settled down in the Nile Delta region, including at Dab^ca.¹²⁸ The Dab^ca frescoes may simply be an indication that Hyksos artists also readily adopted aspects of other cultures as well, even those located as far away as Crete.

¹²² Cf. Bietak 1996, 36, 48-9, 55; id. 1997, 98, 113; id., 'Canaanites in the eastern Nile delta', in A. S. Rainey (ed.), *Egypt, Israel, Sinai: Archaeological and Historical Relationships in the Biblical Period* (Tel Aviv, 1987), 52; Bernal (n. 4), 321, 336-52; Redford (n. 2), 100-1; C. A. Redmount, 'Pots and peoples in the Egyptian Delta: Tell el-Maskhuta and the Hyksos', *JMA* 8/2 (1995), 64-5, 82-3; E. D. Oren, 'Introduction and Overview: Structure and Goals' in Oren 1997, xxi-xxii; O'Connor (n. 3), 63-4 n. 8; Holladay (n. 14), 198.

¹²³ Cf. D. Collon, 'Bull-leaping in Syria', *Agypten und Levante*, 4 (1994), 81-5, pls. 1-3, with further bibliography; Aruz (n. 81), 36-8; ead. (n. 31), *passim*.

¹²⁴ Bietak 1996, 26, 29, 41, fig. 25, pl. 12 c-d; id., 'Zur Herkunft des Seth von Avaris', *Agypten und Levante*, 1 (1990), 15, fig. 5; cf. also Bietak *et al.* (n. 44), 57, fig. 19.

¹²⁵ E. Porada, 'The cylinder seal from Tell el-Dab^ca', *AJA* 88 (1984), 487.

¹²⁶ Shaw (n. 104), 104; see now ead. 1996 (n. 32).

¹²⁷ For a full compilation of such scenes in the Bronze Age Aegean, see Shaw (n. 104), 113-9 and J. G. Younger, 'Bronze

age representations of Aegean bull-games, III', in Laffineur and Niemeier 1995, 507-45; cf. previously J. G. Younger, 'Bronze age representations of Aegean bull-leaping', *AJA* 80 (1976), 125-37; id., 'A new look at Aegean bull-leaping', *Muse*, 17 (1983), 72-80; N. Marinatos, 'The bull as an adversary: some observations on bull-hunting and bull-leaping', *Ariadne*, 5 (1989), 23-32; Negbi (n. 29), 80; Shaw 1995 (n. 32), 343; P. Rehak, 'The use and destruction of Minoan stone bull's head rhyta', in Laffineur and Niemeier 1995, 449-50; B. P. Hallager and E. Hallager, 'The Knossian bull—political propaganda in neo-palatial Crete?', in Laffineur and Niemeier 1995, 547-56; also Morgan (n. 116), 40-4. Cf. now also Shaw 1996 (n. 32).

¹²⁸ Cf. Bietak 1996, 48; id. 1997, 98; id., 'Die Chronologie Agyptens und der Beginn der mittleren Bronzezeitkultur', *Agypten und Levante*, 3 (1992), 29; also T. Save-Soderbergh, 'The Hyksos rule in Egypt', *JEA* 37 (1951), 55-71; J. Van Seters, *The Hyksos: A New Investigation* (New Haven, 1966), *passim*; Hayes (n. 3), 3-4; Bernal (n. 4), 352-4; Redmount (n. 122), 64, 82; but cf. O'Connor (n. 3), 62-3.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to find additional extant evidence which will readily support a hypothesis of Hyksos-Minoan interactions, *contra* Mellink's recent article resurrecting the old idea of a Hyksos empire with far-flung contacts reaching the Aegean.¹²⁹ There are only some thirteen objects even possibly of Hyksos origin, manufacture, or date, mostly deposited as heirlooms, which have been identified in stratified Bronze Age contexts within the Aegean area. These few items include the alabaster lid with the cartouche of Khyan found at Knossos mentioned above (p. 201), three Tell el-Yahudiyeh juglets found on Thera, an ivory figurine at Mallia on Crete, a small frit plaque on the Cape Gelidonya wreck, and a total of seven scarabs found at Mycenae, Pylos, Knossos, and on the Uluburun and Cape Gelidonya shipwrecks.¹³⁰

When attempting to argue for a return trade, or at least some sort of connection, between Minoan Crete and Hyksos Egypt, scholars have until now most frequently pointed to the vase with 'Minoanizing' dolphins and birds found in Tomb 879 at el-Lisht in Egypt,¹³¹ but have had precious little other data which could be utilized, at least until the discovery of the frescoes at Tell el-Dab^ca. The el-Lisht vase has also been considered a crucial piece of evidence in the ongoing debate regarding the redating of the Aegean Late Bronze Age.¹³² An LM I B sherd in a possible late Middle Kingdom/Hyksos period (disturbed) burial deposit at Abydos in Egypt has also been cited upon occasion, but is more likely to be associated with objects deposited in the time of Thutmose III.¹³³

EARLY 18TH DYNASTY CONTACTS WITH THE BRONZE AGE AEGEAN

On the other hand, numerous representations of bulls, a few scenes of acrobats, and even one depiction of a bull-leaper exist in Egypt proper.¹³⁴ These date from both before and after the Hyksos occupation, although none are depicted in quite the same manner as the frescoes at Tell el-Dab^ca.¹³⁵ It should also be noted that Morgan,¹³⁶ citing the single Egyptian example of a bull-leaper,¹³⁷ which was found on an ointment box from Kahun and dated to

¹²⁹ Mellink (n. 17); Oren (n. 122) xxii; cf. previously Kantor (n. 114), 74, and even earlier scholars such as E. Meyer, *Geschichte des Altertums*, v/2.1, 2nd edn (Stuttgart, 1928), 41-58.

¹³⁰ Cf. Cline (n. 17), cat. nos. 8, 99, 105, 122, 126, 135, 140, 148, 152, 680, and 1100-2, with full references.

¹³¹ Cf. with previous references, D. Arnold, F. Arnold, and S. Allen, 'Canaanite imports at Lisht, the middle kingdom capital of Egypt', *Agypten und Levante*, 5 (1995), 21-2; J. Bourriau, 'Beyond Avaris: the Second Intermediate Period in Egypt outside the eastern Delta', in Oren 1997, 165-6; P. E. McGovern, J. Bourriau, G. Harbottle, and S. J. Allen, 'The Archaeological origin and significance of the Dolphin vase as determined by Neutron Activation Analysis', *BASOR* 296 (1994), 31-43.

¹³² Cf. various discussions by P. P. Betancourt, 'Dating the Aegean late bronze age with radiocarbon', *Archaeometry*, 29 (1987), 47; id., 'High chronology or low chronology: the archaeological evidence', in Hardy and Renfrew 1990, 19-23; P. M. Warren, 'Absolute dating of the Aegean late bronze age', *Archaeometry*, 29 (1987), 205-6; M. J. Aitken, H. N. Michael, P. M. Warren, and P. P. Betancourt, 'The Thera eruption: continuing discussion of the dating', *Archaeometry* 30 (1988), 170, 176; S. W. Manning, 'The bronze age eruption of Thera: absolute dating, Aegean chronology and Mediterranean cultural interrelations', *JMA* 1/1 (1988),

17-82; id., *The Absolute Chronology of the Aegean Early Bronze Age: Archaeology, Radiocarbon and History* (Sheffield, 1995), 217 n. 1.

¹³³ Cf. H. J. Kantor, 'The relative chronology of Egypt and its foreign correlations before the late bronze age', in R. W. Ehrich (ed.), *Chronologies in Old World Archaeology* (Chicago, 1965), 23-4; V. Hankey and P. M. Warren, 'The absolute chronology of the Aegean late bronze age', *BICS* 21 (1974), 145; B. J. Kemp and R. S. Merrillees, *Minoan Pottery in Second Millennium Egypt* (Mainz am Rhein, 1980), 220-5, pls. 29-30; P. M. Warren and V. Hankey, *Aegean Bronze Age Chronology* (Bristol, 1989), 135-6, 141, fig. 5, pl. 13; V. Hankey, 'The chronology of the Aegean late bronze age', in P. Astrom (ed), *High, Middle or Low? (Acts of an International Colloquium on Absolute Chronology Held at the University of Gothenburg 20th-22nd August 1987)*, Pt. 2 (Goteborg, 1987), 44-5; ead., 'From chronos to chronology: Egyptian evidence for dating the Aegean bronze age', *Journal of the Ancient Chronology Forum*, 5 (1992), 16; Warren (n. 3), 3.

¹³⁴ Cf. Shaw (n. 104), 92 n. 3, 95-6, 112-13.

¹³⁵ Cf. J. M. Galan, 'Bullfight scenes in ancient Egyptian tombs', *JEA* 80 (1994), 81-96, with further bibliography; also Y. Kempen, *Krieger, Boten und Athleten, Untersuchungen zum Lanlaufinder Griechischen Antike* (Sankt Augustin, 1992), *passim*.

¹³⁶ Morgan (n. 116), 40.

¹³⁷ Cf. Shaw (n. 104), 95-6.

Tutankhamun's time, suggests that it is an isolated example and shows 'little visible familiarity with the actual sport'. Thus, although the recent discoveries at Tell el-Dab^ca, if they are dated to the early 18th Dynasty, might simply indicate a new manner of representation for an animal long familiar to the Egyptians, the specific combination of images, e.g. bulls and bull-leapers with a maze in the background, still strongly indicates some sort of contact with (or influence from) the Bronze Age Aegean and Minoan Crete.

If the finds in Areas H/I, H/II, and H/III at Tell el-Dab^ca are all dated to the early 18th Dynasty rather than to the late Hyksos period, as Bietak now indicates,¹³⁸ this would mean that all the buildings at Avaris which contain 'Minoan' figural wall paintings were built (or rebuilt) and decorated after the Hyksos had been expelled from the city by the Egyptian forces led by Ahmose. Since data from elsewhere in Egypt and the Aegean indicate that Minoan Crete and early 18th Dynasty Egypt were most likely in contact at that time, such a redating does not present an insurmountable problem, although again it would mean abandoning or modifying many of the Minoan—Hyksos hypotheses suggested by scholars in the first flush of excitement following the original discovery of the Dab^ca frescoes. Bietak and Marinatos admit that: 'it would . . . be more easy and economic to explain the presence of the paintings within one stratum instead of two which are separated by a political break'.¹³⁹

It should be pointed out, however, that it is in actuality somewhat difficult to pinpoint precise examples of such Aegean contacts with early New Kingdom Egypt prior to the reign of Thutmose III. There are only a few relevant Egyptian objects in the Aegean, primarily found in the Shaft Graves at Mycenae,¹⁴⁰ and only a few contemporary sherds of Aegean pottery in early New Kingdom Egypt. These include an LM I B sherd found in an early 18th Dynasty (Ahmose—Amenhotep I) context at Kom el-Rabia (Memphis), an LH/LM I sherd in a probable late Second Intermediate Period or early 18th Dynasty context at Kerma, the LM I B sherd in a tomb at Abydos (328.A.07) within a debated context dating either to the Hyksos period or the time of Thutmose III, and possible Mycenaean sherds reported from the Treasury of Thutmose I at Karnak North in Egypt.¹⁴¹ A number of other LH/LM I-II sherds have been found at a total of nine sites in Egypt, but most are in contexts dating to the time of Thutmose III. There appears, at the moment, to be a lack of specifically LM IA pottery in contemporary early 18th Dynasty contexts within Egypt,¹⁴² an observation which may be potentially important in these and future discussions.

As a final point in connection with his suggestion that Ahmose was in contact with the Aegean during the early 18th Dynasty, Bietak cites an inlaid dagger and an inlaid axe inscribed with Ahmose's name.¹⁴³ These two well-known objects, sometimes suggested as being of Aegean manufacture,¹⁴⁴ were discovered in the tomb of the 17th Dynasty Queen Ahhotep, mother of both

¹³⁸ Bietak 1996, 76.

¹³⁹ Bietak and Marinatos 1995, 62.

¹⁴⁰ Cline (n. 17), *passim*; id., 'Egyptian and Near Eastern imports at Late Bronze Age Mycenae', in Davies and Schofield 1995, 91—115 with references.

¹⁴¹ Cf. most recently Cline (n. 17), 31; Warren and Hankey (n. 133), 138-46, figs. 6-7; P. M. Warren, 'Summary of evidence for the absolute chronology of the early part of the Aegean late bronze age derived from historical Egyptian sources', in Hardy and Renfrew 1990, 25; id. (n. 3), 5—10, 13; Hankey 1995 (n. 133), 18-20; Manning 1995 (n. 132), 203-4, 206, 221, 224-5; idem, 'Dating the Aegean Bronze Age: without, with, and beyond, radiocarbon', *Acta Archaeologica*,

67 (1996), 15-37; previously Hankey and Warren (n. 133), 145-7; Kemp and Merrillees (n. 133), 226-45; I. Vincentelli and F. Tiradritti, 'La presenza egea in Egitto', in M. Marazzi, S. Tusa, and L. Vagnetti (eds), *Traffici micenei nel Mediterraneo: Problemi storici e documentazione archeologica* (Taranto, 1986), 327-34; Hankey 1987 (n. 133), 44-7; Manning 1988 (n. 132), 28-9, 33, 60-1.

¹⁴² Manning 1996 (n. 141); Betancourt (n. 17), 429.

¹⁴³ Bietak 1996, 80; id. 1997, 124.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Kantor (n. 114), 63-6, 71-2, 74; W. Stevenson Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (London, 1981), 219-22, figs. 215-16; Warren (n. 3), 5, with additional references; Aruz (n. 81), 42-3.

Ahmoose and Kamose.¹⁴⁵ These Egyptian inlaid weapons are frequently cited in connection with the inlaid daggers, possibly of Minoan rather than Mycenaean manufacture, found in the Shaft Graves at Mycenae on Mainland Greece.¹⁴⁶ It should be noted, however, that there are also good parallels with inlaid Hyksos daggers, including one found at Saqqara inscribed with the name of the Hyksos King Apophis.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, it is quite possible that all these inlaid weapons have an earlier common origin with the artisans and metalworking techniques found in Byblos.¹⁴⁸ In addition, if the 'high chronology' for the Late Bronze Age Aegean, which sets the eruption of Thera at c. 1628 BC,¹⁴⁹ is correct, then Grave Circle A at Mycenae, in which many of the Aegean inlaid daggers were found, would overlap with both the Hyksos period and the early 18th Dynasty.¹⁵⁰

BRONZE AGE CHRONOLOGY

As a result of his excavations at Dab^ca, Bietak has been involved for years in a debate concerning the chronology of Bronze Age Syria-Palestine.¹⁵¹ However, it is only recently that data from the Dab^ca excavations, specifically the newly-discovered 'Minoan' frescoes, have been seen to be of possible relevance to the chronology of the Bronze Age Aegean. While some scholars have argued that these paintings at Tell el-Dab^ca support the new 'high chronology' for the Late Bronze Age Aegean,¹⁵² Bietak now suggests that they in fact support the 'traditional chronology',¹⁵³ which dates the eruption of Thera to some time before 1500 BC.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁵ Note that the division between the Egyptian 17th and 18th Dynasties is artificial to some extent, since the same family is involved. Queen Ahhotep's titles included 'Mistress of the shores of Hau-nebut', which Bietak (1996, 80, and 1997, 124) finds 'puzzling' and intriguing, since 'Hau-nebut' is a geographical term which was once thought to be a reference to the Aegean (cf. e.g. Meyer (n. 129), 54-7). However, J. Vercoutter, 'Les Haou-nebut', *BIFAO* 46 (1947), 125-58 and C. Vandersleyen, *Les Guerres d'Amosis* (Brussels, 1971), 139-74 (cf. also id., 'OUADJ-OUR ne signifie pas "mer": qu'on se le dise!', *GM* 103 (1988), 78-80; E. Iversen, 'Some remarks on the *h3w-nbw.t*', *ZAS* 114 (1987), 54-9; A. Nibbi, 'Some further remarks on the Haunebut', *ZAS* 116 (1989), 153-60) have long since demonstrated to the satisfaction of most scholars that while the term was indeed apparently used as a reference to 'Greeks' in the Late Period, it was more likely a reference to areas in Syria-Palestine during the New Kingdom Period. Bietak now suggests that the identification should be 'reconsidered seriously'; cf. also recently Hankey, *Minerva* (n. 42), 13-14; P. Janosi, 'The Queens Ahhotep I and II and Egypt's Foreign Relations', *Journal of the Ancient Chronology Forum*, 5 (1991/92), 99-105; Bernal (n. 4), 416-17.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. R. Laffineur, 'L'incrustation à l'époque mycénienne', *L'Antiquité classique*, 43 (1974), 5-37; id., 'Material and craftsmanship in the Mycenaean shaft graves: imports vs. local productions', *Minos*, 25-6 (1990-1), 269-76; A. Xenaki-Sakellariou and C. Chatziliou, *Peinture en Metal' a L'époque mycénienne: incrustation damasquinage niellure* (Athens, 1989), *passim*.

¹⁴⁷ Original publication in *Annales du Service des Antiquités*, 7 (1906), 115-20; also H. J. Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient* (London, 1963), 138-9; Van Seters (n. 128), 71-2; Bernal (n. 4), 354.

¹⁴⁸ K. Branigan, 'Byblite daggers in Cyprus and Crete', *AJA* 70 (1966), 123-6; id., 'Further light on prehistoric relations between Crete and Syria', *AJA* 71 (1967), 117-21; id., 'The early bronze age daggers of Crete', *BSA* 62 (1967),

211-40; cf. also Bietak (n. 122), 52 and id. 1997, 98 on the possible Byblite origins of the Hyksos residents of Avaris.

¹⁴⁹ Betancourt 1987 (n. 132), 45-9; Manning 1988 (n. 132), 17-82; also the discussion section in *Agypten und Levante*, 5 (1995), 121-6.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Cline (n. 17), 7; Negbi (n. 29), 81-3; Manning 1995 (n. 132), 217.

¹⁵¹ Cf. now M. Bietak, 'Excursus: the chronology of MB II and Middle Kingdom Egypt', in Oren 1997, 125-8; previously id., 'Problems of Middle Bronze Age chronology: new evidence from Egypt', *AJA* 88 (1984), 471-85; id., 'The Middle Bronze Age of the Levant - a new approach to relative and absolute chronology', in P. Astrom (ed), *High, Middle or Low? (Acts of an International Colloquium on Absolute Chronology Held at the University of Gothenburg 20th-22nd August 1987)*, Pt. 3 (Goteborg, 1989), 78-120; id., 'Egypt and Canaan during the middle bronze age', *BASOR* 281 (1991), 27-72; id., 'Die Chronologie Agyptens' (n. 128), 29-37; W. G. Dever, 'Relations between Syria, Palestine and Egypt in the "Hyksos period"', in J. N. Tubb (ed.), *Palestine in the Bronze and Iron Ages: Papers in Honour of Olga Tufnell* (London, 1985), 69-87; id., 'Tell el-Dab^ca and Levantine Middle Bronze Age chronology: a rejoinder to Manfred Bietak', *BASOR* 281 (1991), 73-9; id., 'The chronology of Syria-Palestine in the second millennium BC', *Agypten und Levante*, 3 (1992), 39-51; id., 'The chronology of Syria-Palestine in the second millennium BCE: a review of current issues', *BASOR* 288 (1992), 1-25; id., 'Settlement patterns and chronology of Palestine in the middle bronze age', in Oren 1997, 285-301; J. M. Weinstein, 'The chronology of Palestine in the early second millennium BC', *BASOR* 288 (1992), 27-46; id. (n. 3), 84-90. Holladay (n. 14), 210 n. 5, has stated most recently that '... the absolute dates maintained by Bietak ... do not, as yet, command universal assent ... and, indeed appear unworkable—as presently formulated—in terms of Western Asiatic relative chronologies, particularly those of Syria-Palestine.'

Bietak argues that if the Dab^Ca frescoes are indeed from the period after the early 18th Dynasty Egyptians had regained control of Avaris, i.e. some time after c.1530 BC, then the Thera frescoes should also be placed within that time period.¹⁵⁵ This would once again bring the Thera frescoes within the sixteenth century BC, as per the 'traditional chronology' for the Bronze Age Aegean, rather than within the seventeenth century BC as per the 'high chronology'.¹⁵⁶ The alternative, to raise the dates of Egyptian chronology nearly 130 years in order to agree with the suggested Aegean 'high chronology', would wreak havoc with Egyptian history and, according to Bietak,¹⁵⁷ would be unacceptable to Egyptologists.

Furthermore, Bietak suggests that recent finds of Thera pumice at Tell el-Dab^Ca 'within a single restricted stratum of the New Kingdom' date the island's eruption to 'sometime after the reign of Ahmose and before that of Thutmose III (c. 1500 BC)', a period which is 'perfectly in keeping with the traditional dating of the volcanic eruption of Santorini'.¹⁵⁸ Finds of Thera pumice, some in stratified Bronze Age contexts, have been found elsewhere in recent years as well, including the Nile Delta, the west coast of Turkey, coastal Syria-Palestine, and a number of islands and areas within the Aegean.¹⁵⁹ Although these earlier finds had confirmed an LM I A date for the volcanic eruption of Santorini, they were not of much help in providing an absolute chronological date for that event. Bietak's new data, on the other hand, if indeed excavated in a stratified context and dated according to Egyptian chronology, might provide the key to the long sought absolute date for the Thera eruption. If the explosion is indeed to be placed within the early 18th Dynasty, rather than the Hyksos period, then we might consider more seriously an ongoing discussion in Egyptological circles which has been exploring the possibility that the cataclysmic event was seen by the Egyptians and recorded in the 'Tempest Stele of Ahmose', dated to c. 1530 BC.¹⁶⁰ If this text does record the Thera eruption, it would be the only confirmed firsthand textual account of that event which we currently possess.¹⁶¹

It remains to be seen, however, how other scholars involved in the Aegean chronology debate (e.g. Betancourt, Manning, Hankey, Warren, and others) will interpret Bietak's new evidence and hypotheses; it is unlikely that his statements will go unchallenged for long. The implications are enormous; for example, it was the initial dating of the Dab^Ca frescoes to the Hyksos period, with the resulting implications of contacts between Minoan Crete and Hyksos

¹⁵² Cf. Cline (n. 17), 5.

¹⁵³ Bietak 1996, 76.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Warren and Hankey (n. 133), 215.

¹⁵⁵ Bietak 1996, 76.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Betancourt 1987 (n. 132); Manning 1988 (n. 132); id. 1995 (n. 132), 200-16.

¹⁵⁷ Bietak 1996, 76.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 78, pl. 34 a-b; id. 1997, 124-5.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Foster and Ritner (n. 3); M. Artyz, 'Conical cups and pumice, Aegean cult at Tel Nami, Israel', in R. Laffineur and L. Basch (eds), *Thalassa: L'Egeé préhistorique et la mer* (Liege, 1991), 203-6; P. M. Warren and H. Puchelt, 'Stratified pumice from bronze age Knossos', in Hardy and Renfrew 1990, 71-81; J. S. Soles and C. Davaras, 'Theran ash in Minoan Crete: new excavations on Mochlos', in Hardy and Renfrew 1990, 89-95; P. P. Betancourt, P. Goldberg, R. Hope Simpson, and C.J. Vitaliano, 'Excavations at Pseira: the evidence for the Thera eruption', in Hardy and Renfrew 1990, 96-9; T. Marketou, 'Santorini tephra from Rhodes and Kos: some chronological remarks based on the

stratigraphy', in Hardy and Renfrew 1990, 100-13; D. G. Sullivan, 'Minoan tephra in lake sediments in western Turkey: dating the eruption and assessing the atmospheric dispersal of the ash', in Hardy and Renfrew 1990, 114-19; V. Francaviglia, 'Sea-borne pumice deposits of archaeological interest on Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean beaches', in Hardy and Renfrew 1990, 127-34; D. J. Stanley and H. Sheng, 'Volcanic shards from Santorini (upper Minoan ash) in the Nile Delta, Egypt', *Nature*, 320 (1986), 733-5.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. C. Vandersleyen, 'Une tempête sous le règne d'Amosis', *Revue d'Égyptologie*, 19 (1967), 123-59; id., 'Deux nouveaux fragments de la stèle d'Amosis relatant une tempête', *Revue d'Égyptologie*, 20 (1968), 127-34; H. Goedicke, 'The end of the Hyksos in Egypt', in L. Lesko (ed), *Egyptological Studies in Honor of Richard A. Parker* (London, 1986), 37-47; E. N. Davis, 'A storm in Egypt during the reign of Ahmose', in Hardy and Renfrew 1990, 232-5; Foster and Ritner (n. 3), Redford 1997 (n. 2), 16; M.H. Wiener and J.P. Allen, 'Separate lives: the Ahmose Stela and the Thera eruption', *JNES* 57 (1998), 1-28.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Foster and Ritner (n. 3), 10.

Egypt, which led the present author finally to accept a variation of the 'high chronology' after literally years of vacillating between the 'traditional' and 'high' chronologies.¹⁶² Now, with such a crucial chronological linchpin removed, or at least cast into doubt, there seems once again the possibility that the 'traditional chronology' is correct. If the Dab^ca frescoes are indications of contacts between Minoan Crete and early 18th Dynasty Egypt, rather than with Hyksos Egypt, I, for one, shall be back on the fence regarding the suggested dates for the Aegean Late Bronze Age, though leaning once again towards the 'traditional chronology'. If, however, they can still be used as indications of contacts between Minoan Crete and Hyksos Egypt, I shall be content to continue working with a version of the 'high chronology'.¹⁶³

ICONOGRAPHY AND INTERACTIONS

Whatever the date of the Dab^ca frescoes, and regardless of by whom they were painted, we are still left with the question of whether the transplanted images held the same cultural or religious significance for the Hyksos or the Egyptians as they did for the Minoans. If they were painted for resident Minoans, as Bietak has suggested, then the question may or may not be moot, but otherwise one may well contrast comments made at the same international conference by Wiener:

. . . whatever cult significance the paintings may have had in Crete, by the time they travelled they may simply have been a status symbol . . .¹⁶⁴

with those by Kopcke:

What has been shown from Tell el-Dab^ca is not Aegean. At best, you can claim it is of Aegean inspiration. In the first place we should, as art historians, be analytical in a responsible fashion. In any case the following question is really more interesting: could a foreign idiom have been adopted?¹⁶⁵

Much of what has been written to date about the Dab^ca frescoes by scholars other than the excavators themselves falls into the general category of 'connoisseurship'—that is, collections of observations and catalogues concerning the relevant bull-leaping scenes around the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean. There have been few articles which undertake in-depth considerations either of ethnographic and theoretical issues or of the ramification of these frescoes. Thus questions concerning the iconography of the frescoes and the implications of the ethnic identity of the inhabitants and artists at Tell el-Dab^ca have rarely been addressed; only a very few scholars have attempted to discuss such topics seriously to date.¹⁶⁶ Surely these would be fruitful fields for future inquiry and research.

At any rate, it seems clear that the end of the Hyksos period and the start of the 18th Dynasty saw the beginnings of what would be, for the remainder of the Bronze Age, a time of truly international connections between Egypt, the Aegean, and the Eastern Mediterranean; an era perhaps replete with gift exchanges (royal or otherwise), private merchants plying the seas in ships filled with exotic and mundane merchandise, and itinerant artisans and

¹⁶² Cline (n. 17), 5-8.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ M. H. Wiener, comment during discussion session, in Laffineur and Niemeier 1995, 286; cf. also id., comments in discussion section, *Ägypten und Levante*, 5 (1995), 128-9.

¹⁶⁵

G. Kopcke, comment during discussion session, in Laffineur and Niemeier 1995, 285.

¹⁶⁶ Morgan (n. 116), 29-53; Redmount (n. 122), 61-89; A. B. Knapp, 'Mediterranean Bronze Age trade: distance, power and place', in Cline and Harris-Cline (n. 28), 193-207.

impoverished mercenaries selling their services to the highest bidder.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, Karageorghis points out that remnants of Cypriot vases, more than 500 sherds in all, have been found at Tell el-Dab^ca in both Hyksos and early 18th Dynasty contexts,¹⁶⁸ and Bietak has now optimistically suggested the likelihood that 'a Cypriot community lived among the Canaanites at Tell el-Dab^ca'.¹⁶⁹ In turn, both Hyksos and early 18th Dynasty Egyptian objects, including a vase apparently inscribed with the cartouche of Ahmose, have been found in Cyprus in Middle and Late Bronze Age contexts.¹⁷⁰ Filling out the picture are the connections with the Bronze Age Aegean which have been discussed above, while Arnold *et al.* have presented additional evidence for interconnections and contacts between Egypt and the outside world, especially Syria-Palestine, during the Middle Kingdom and Hyksos Periods.¹⁷¹ However, one is faced with the dual questions of (a) how much of the trade and/or contacts were conducted on behalf of the kings and royalty of the countries in question, as opposed to that conducted by private merchants or individuals acting on their own behalf; and (b) how far can we push the extant artefacts in our effort to uncover answers to both theoretical and applied questions.

Bietak begins to address the question of why these particular images were painted at Avaris, but dodges the issue by suggesting that it is 'premature to attempt a definitive explanation at this point'.¹⁷² Even so, he hypothesizes that the paintings at Tell el-Dab^ca, particularly those in Area H/I with their theme of bulls and bull-leapers, have a royal symbolism not found in the 'Minoan' paintings elsewhere in the Eastern Mediterranean. Apart from the possibly later representations at Mycenae, Bietak notes that only at Knossos and Dab^ca is the bull-leaping ritual represented in wall-paintings, which indicates to him that the Dab^ca frescoes must 'be seen in the context of a royal architecture that was of equal political importance to that of Knossos'.¹⁷³ It is on this basis that Bietak presents the revised version of his original 'Minoan princess' theory;¹⁷⁴ as noted, although the scenario remains fundamentally the same, now the princess lives in Egyptian rather than Hyksos Avaris, and is united in matrimony with Pharaoh Ahmose himself rather than with a Hyksos king as previously hypothesized. Although such suggested dynastic connections between superpowers in the ancient world can be exciting to contemplate, one might prefer to have a little more concrete evidence before accepting Bietak's oft-repeated (and now revised) suggestion, especially if it is to be used to explain the very existence for, and the specific iconography of, these paintings at Tell el-Dab^ca.

SUMMATION AND CONCLUSIONS

As Maimonides wrote so long ago,

The object of this treatise is to enlighten [those] . . . lost in perplexity and anxiety . . . I have contented myself with briefly stating the principles . . . and . . . fundamental truths, together with such hints as approach a clear exposition.¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁷ Cline (n. 17); id. (n. 42); id. (n. 120).

¹⁶⁸ V. Karageorghis, 'Relations between Cyprus and Egypt—Second Intermediate Period and XIIIth Dynasty', *Agypten und Levante*, 5 (1995), 73-9; cf. Bietak 1996, 35, 59, 63, 70, fig. 49, pl. 26 a-c.

¹⁶⁹ Bietak 1996, 59.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 63, fig. 48 b; cf. also G. Clerc, 'Un fragment de vase au nom d'Ahmosis (?) a Palaepaphos-Teratsoudhia', in V. Karageorghis (ed.), *Tombs at Palaepaphos I. Teratsoudhia*, 2.

Eliomylia (Nicosia, 1990), 95-103; I. Jacobsson, *Aegyptiaca from Late Bronze Age Cyprus* (Jonsered, 1994), *passim*; L. C. Maguire, 'Tell el-Dab^ca: the Cypriot connection', in Davies and Schofield 1995, 54-65.

Arnold et al. (n. 131), 13-32.

Bietak 1996, 79.

¹⁷³ Ibid. 74, 79.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 80-1; cf. previously id. 1992, 26-8; id. 1995, 26.

¹⁷⁵ Maimonides (n. 36), 2, 5.

Tell el-Dab^ca is a unique site in many ways, but especially for the amount of excitement it has been generating since 1992, the year when the first public announcements concerning the discovery of 'Minoan' wall paintings were made. Given the bombshell now dropped by Bietak, namely that the frescoes at Dab^ca should be dated only to the early 18th Dynasty and not to the Hyksos period at all,¹⁷⁶ one can only guess at the effect that this will have, or has already had, on the scholars following enthusiastically in his wake. It will be interesting to see whether these other scholars will decide to offer their own revised interpretations based upon the newly published data, or if they abstain from further speculation until future excavation seasons at Tell el-Dab^ca produce additional results.

In the end, despite the past several years of enthusiastic debates over the Tell el-Dab^ca frescoes and their implications,¹⁷⁷ or perhaps because of them, the only observations that may really be made without fear of contradiction is that the excavations at ancient Avaris are still ongoing and that, as a result, Bietak has already had to change his mind several times regarding the stratigraphy and the proper dating of the wall paintings. There is also only one conclusion that will be acceptable to all scholars and which will be readily apparent to any who have followed the discussions of the Dab^ca paintings since the first publication back in 1992: namely, that it is probably futile, and possibly even dangerous, to depend too firmly upon, build too loftily atop, or delve too deeply into, any hypotheses regarding contacts between either the Hyksos and the Minoans or the early 18th Dynasty Egyptians and the Minoans which are constructed solely or primarily upon the basis of these wall paintings.

Given the manner in which the scholarly world has breathlessly awaited each new pronouncement by Bietak and his excavation team, it would probably be heretical at this point, and certainly ungracious in the extreme, to suggest that in retrospect it might have been better if they had waited, and had made the scholarly community wait as well, until the excavations in this section of Avaris were completed and the final decisions concerning stratigraphy, chronology, and findspots were made, before publishing the results and letting the debates begin. Nevertheless, it is clear in retrospect that such a strategy might have been better, given the backtracking and rethinking now necessary on the part of the entire scholarly community concerned with this topic, and given the effort and funds expended on the numerous scholarly articles which may now be, either partially or totally, suddenly irrelevant in the light of the new data and dating schemes proposed by Bietak. It would be interesting, in fact, to calculate just how much has already been spent, in terms of both money and time, on the six volumes of *Agypten und Levante*, not to mention the other conference volumes, books, and journals which, if Bietak's redating is correct, contain suddenly obsolete papers discussing Dab^ca material in terms of Hyksos interconnections rather than early 18th Dynasty interconnections.

Therefore, although it may prove impossible, it seems not at all unreasonable to suggest that the rest of the scholarly community might consider giving the Tell el-Dab^ca excavators some breathing-room. Rather than rushing to produce additional, or revised, hypotheses based upon Bietak's new dating for the wall paintings and other tentative evidences for suggested resident Minoans or Minoan royalty at Avaris, it might be wiser to exercise restraint and wait until they have concluded their excavations in the relevant areas of the site, and have

¹⁷⁶ Bietak 1996, 76.

5 (1995), 126-32.

¹⁷⁷ See e.g. the discussion section in *Agypten und Levante*,

published all their raw data, including sectional drawings and enough stratigraphical information to date the frescoes and other pertinent artefacts, both to their satisfaction and ours.¹⁷⁸ In short, while giving thanks to Bietak and his team for their herculean exploration and publication efforts, those of us watching from the sidelines might consider observing at least a brief respite before we once again 'take up with Avaris'.¹⁷⁹

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¹⁷⁸ Bietak is clearly aware of the need for full publication of all relevant data; in Bietak 1997, 127 he states: 'Some of the criticism is based on the claim that the results of Tell el-Dab^ca have not yet been fully published in order to control the results presented by the excavator. This is true, but complicated excavations need some time for their evaluation and subsequent publication . . . the evaluation of

the material is not in the hands of a single individual, but of an international group of at least 20 scholars based in different countries. The material is not secret, it is accessible. We always have an open door for interested colleagues.'

¹⁷⁹ With apologies to Lord Byron, *Don Juan* (1818-1824), canto I, st. 216.