

CHAPTER 4

Documentary and Archaeological Evidence of Minoan Trade

Thalassocracies, Colonies and Piracy

Herodotus was the first historian to suggest that Minos, ruler of Crete controlled the seas and colonised the islands.¹ He is followed in this by Thucydides who writes that Minos was the first to create a navy, put down piracy and founded the first colonies in the Cyclades.² According to Thucydides in these settled times both Crete and the islands began to pursue the acquisition of wealth. The source for both historians was an oral tradition that had been passed down through the centuries, a remnant of a distant Bronze Age memory. Their reliability on this point is about the same as the data from Homer, where only the information that can be supported archaeologically can be considered factual. Anything else has probably been corrupted through endless recitations over hundreds of years. The question that remains is what has modern archaeology contributed to the tales of Herodotus and Thucydides?

The question is not easily answered, especially on the idea of a Minoan thalassocracy. As one would expect there is very little physical evidence of a large fleet controlled by the palaces. Unless a large number of Minoan wrecks are found, which is particularly unlikely, this will continue to be the case. There is no apparent evidence of ships or ship building on the Linear A documents. There is no mention of Keftiu naval prowess in contemporary Bronze Age documents, unless one considers the Egyptian record that mentions Keftiu ships, but in this document the ownership of the vessels is in

¹ Herodotus I, 171 and III, 122 where he mentions that Polycrates was the first Greek to conceive of an empire by the sea, "unless it were Minos the Knossian, and those (if there were any such) who had the mastery of the Aegean at an earlier time."

² Thuc. I, 4-8.

doubt.³ There is also very little artwork that expresses Minoan dominance at sea. Ships do appear prominently on the seals and there is of course the fresco from the “Admiral’s house” in Akrotiri, but there is no further artistic testimony to a thalassocracy.

A natural consequence of a thalassocracy would be colonies. Since there is no physical evidence of a fleet, proponents of the thalassocracy have suggested a number of sites exhibiting Minoan pottery and architecture that could be Minoan colonies. Knapp has noted that during the medieval period the Mediterranean was controlled by maintaining a chain of island bases, which supplied food and water as well as being a sanctuary from pirates.⁴ A number of sites in the Aegean have been tentatively identified as colonies due to the presence of Minoan pottery, cults, burial customs and architecture. Excavations of the proposed colonies of Ialysos and Trianda on Rhodes, Seraglio on Kos and Miletos in Anatolia are very small, sometimes only a few trenches and their status as Minoan colonies should be taken with caution.⁵ Trianda has shown architecture from LMI and could possibly be a colony of Minoan settlers. Most of the other sites are buried below modern buildings and are at some places below the current water level, making exposure of any architecture difficult at best.⁶ The identification of the larger sites with a high degree of Minoanisation, namely Phylakopi, Akrotiri and Ayia Irini as colonies is uncertain. Kythera appears to be of a different nature to the others and probably was a colony, perhaps the only one.

The three main Cycladic sites show a dramatic increase in Minoan artefacts from the Neopalatial period. In addition to the usual pottery finds, all three sites have yielded Minoan weight systems, Minoan-type frescoes as well as evidence of the use of Linear A. At Phylakopi on Melos there is

³ From the Annals of Thutmose III at the temple of Amun at Karnak 9th Campaign, year 34. See Chapter 2, 73.

⁴ Knapp, A.B., “Thalassocracies in Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean Trade: Making and Breaking a Myth”, *World Archaeology*, 24, Ancient Trade: New Perspectives, 1993, 338.

⁵ Rehak & Younger: 1998, 137.

⁶ Rutter: 1997, Lesson 18, 3.

evidence of Neolithic / Early Minoan contacts related to the obsidian trade thereafter the earliest signs of interaction between the two islands comes at EMIII-MMI with the discovery of a Minoan stone vase and some MMI sherds. This contact increases significantly in LMIIa-LMIIb where a large quantity of imported Minoan pottery and local imitations make an appearance.⁷ Ayia Irini on Keos has had a much longer continual association with Crete. It has already been noted that it was probably the gateway of Laurion silver from Middle Minoan times.⁸ Quantities of stone vases and some pottery dated from MMI – MMIII have been discovered there, although Kamares ware is limited. As at Phylakopi, it is from LMI that Minoan pottery becomes prolific, with the majority of imported pottery coming from LMI. Among the significant finds from Ayia Irini are fresco fragments, clay idols whose dress recalls the Minoan Snake Goddess, a bronze figurine with hand raised to the head which is a very common Minoan cult figure, a set of lead weights and a Linear A tablet as well as three other items inscribed with Linear A signs.⁹ The majority of Minoan finds have been made at Akrotiri on Thera, which is perhaps unsurprising given her sudden demise. Contact between these two islands became apparent in Middle Minoan times, and as in the other two sites, this became increasingly conspicuous from the Neopalatial period. In addition to pottery and Linear A discoveries there are a number of architectural which resemble Minoan features such as pier-and-door partitions, indented external facades and to a lesser extent the use of columns and lustral basins.¹⁰ Minoan architectural features can also be found at Phylakopi such as the use of columns.¹¹

Despite this overwhelming evidence of Minoan influence it does not necessarily follow that these sites constituted Minoan colonies. There is no apparent break in any of these settlements which would

⁷ Branigan, K., "Minoan Colonialism" in *BSA*, No 76, 1981, 28.

⁸ Chapter 2, 80.

⁹ Branigan: 1981, 28.

¹⁰ Branigan: 1981, 29.

¹¹ Doulas: 1983, 128; Branigan: 1981, 29.

suggest a conquering force or migration.¹² The influx of Minoan wares and influence does not erase the local cultures and the essential character remains Cycladic. Branigan breaks down the concept of colonisation into three subsections: (1) “governed colonies” that are firmly under the control of the ruling nation with governors and a military presence; (2) “settlement colonies” that involve the settlement of an uninhabited stretch of land and lastly (3) “community colonies” with which foreign immigrants merge with the local populace.¹³ The first colonisation category to be ruled out is (2) “settlement colonies” as these towns were inhabited before Minoan influence.

The case for (1) “governed colonies” is weak. The presence of Linear A might suggest that the three towns were under Minoan administration and both Ayia Irini and Phylakopi have large buildings with upper stories that could possibly represent the homes of governors. At Phylakopi the single Linear A tablet may have been found in the mansion of that town, but this context has not been verified.¹⁴ However, neither of these buildings appear to be centres of administration which one would expect from a well-managed colony and their construction does not remotely resemble Minoan architecture. This may suggest that these buildings were in fact not influenced much by Minoan culture and if they were government centres then in all likelihood this government was of a local character.¹⁵ There is much similarity in the architecture of Akrotiri and Crete. However, Dumas comments that this appears to be Minoan influence laid upon a Cycladic foundation and it did not supplant the Cycladic character of the settlement.¹⁶ There also appears to be no military presence at any of the settlements. No Minoan weapons or garrisons suggesting a Minoan occupying force have been found, even at Akrotiri where time was virtually frozen. Moreover, there does not seem to be a significant separation of Minoan finds in relation to the local wares. If the majority of Minoan wares were possessed by the

¹² Dumas: 1983, 127-128.

¹³ Branigan: 1981, 25-26.

¹⁴ Branigan: 1981, 30.

¹⁵ Branigan: 1981, 30.

¹⁶ Dumas: 1983, 128.

Minoan colonisers one would expect this to be reflected in the uneven distribution of these artefacts. This is not apparent.¹⁷ There is therefore little evidence that these settlements were colonies governed by the Minoans at Crete.

The possibility still exists that they were “community colonies” (3), although this is also far from certain. It is conceivable that a group of Minoans established themselves in each town, quite probably in the interests of trade. The presence of weight measurements in all three towns possibly suggests the economic nature of such a settlement. If these towns did constitute such a colony, the settlers must have been dispersed amongst the local population, particularly at Ayia Irini and Phylakopi. It is also possible that there could have been craftsmen among the settlers, promoting the imitation of Minoan wares. The creation of friendly bases in strategic locations during the height of Minoan commercial achievement does seem logical. The presence of ambassadors if not colonies is not unheard of. Mari tablet ARM A 1270, lines 26-31 records the presence of a Kaptar interpreter or agent, whose role may have been similar to the Minoan “colonisers” of Ayia Irini, Phylakopi and Akrotiri.

The situation of Kastri at Kythera seems to have been quite different to those settlements mentioned above. This area was settled during EMII, possibly displacing the Helladic inhabitants.¹⁸ During that time until LMIIb there are very close ties between Kastri and Crete. The architecture appears similar to a typical Minoan town, including evidence of a street drain. The ceramic wares from EMII to LMIIb seem to be almost entirely Minoan. Much of the earlier wares are local imitation whereas much of the LMI pottery was imported.¹⁹ This town would appear to be a Minoan “settlement colony”, which maintained strong ties with Crete until the destruction of the new palaces.

¹⁷ Branigan: 1981, 31.

¹⁸ See Chapter 1, 30-31.

¹⁹ Branigan: 1981, 32.

One of the strongest points in the defence of a thalassocracy is the lack of fortification at the major Minoan sites, particularly those facing the sea. The absence of walls appears to suggest that the Minoans did not fear an invasion and perhaps their protection came from elsewhere, namely their strength at sea. Starr however has noted that in many island settlements the sea itself is viewed as a defence.²⁰ Raids from foreign enemies were probably countered by skirmishes on land rather than a pitched battle at sea. He cites the example of the Athenians waiting for the Persians to land at Marathon before fighting. It was only when the gifted Themistocles provided an alternative strategy in the war of 479, a maritime one, that the course of Athenian history began to revolve around naval strength. Even Britain first began an effective policy of meeting enemies at sea as late as the 16th and 17th centuries AD.

In order to maintain a thalassocracy there must have been some form of armed force. There does not appear to be the same warrior culture in Minoan Crete that existed in Mycenaean Greece. In fact fewer warrior graves have been found in LMI than any other period of Minoan history, yet this is during the height of Minoan prosperity.²¹ Weapons were by no means unknown in Crete. It is probable that the boar's tusk helmets and body shields originated in Middle Minoan Crete before spreading to mainland Greece, along with long daggers, short-swords, tube-socketed spears and arrowheads.²² Minoan weapons were also exported to the East. The wreck / battle fresco from Akrotiri (Plate 19) appears to show soldiers with large shields and long spears. This may well have been the form of armies in the Aegean. The presence of some form of military strength must not be doubted, especially when considered alongside the development of the palaces. The problem comes when translating that concept into a thalassocracy. If the Minoans were dependent on a navy for their

²⁰ Starr: 1955, 286-287; Jane, F.T., *The British Battle Fleet I*, London, 1915, 6-7.

²¹ Manning, S. W., "The Military Function in Late Minoan I Crete: A Note", *World Archaeology*, 18, Weaponry and Warfare, 1986, 284.

²² Manning: 1986, 285.

protection, then that fleet must have been pride of the palaces. Yet there is no artistic representation of ships and warriors in a Minoan context. The fresco from the “Admiral’s house” is the closest portrayal. This is however on Thera not Crete, highly Minoanized, but probably not even a Minoan colony. It is true that Minoan art is not character driven like that of East, which tries to depict (often erroneously) their rulers in their all-conquering glory and it is also true that ships receive a fair amount of representation on seals, but this fresco hardly seems to be a justifiable depiction of the one element that enabled the Minoans to rule the Aegean.

There are other facts in the defence of a thalassocracy. There would appear to have been a number of places throughout the Aegean named Minoa, examples of which have been recorded in the Aegean on the island of Paros as well as on the Greek mainland near Megara and the Southern Peloponnese near Epidaurus Limera.²³ These combined with the legendary accounts of the exploits of Minos of Knossos would suggest that the Minoans had a command of the sea. However anachronistic and legendary chronicles probably have little value. As mentioned before legends can be a guide to understanding Bronze Age society only if their truthfulness can be verified through archaeology or other contemporary records. There is no such record of a Minoan thalassocracy. The mention of the Keftiu ships in the Armana letters does not indicate ownership and this reference appears to indicate vessels which plied the sea routes to the land of Keftiu. The use of both Herodotus and Thucydides as sources is very dangerous. Their knowledge of a Bronze Age was non-existent. Writing in Athens during the age of Pericles both historians were eyewitnesses to the first unquestioned thalassocracy and it would not have been difficult to imagine Minos with a similar strength. Thucydides does acknowledge that the ships and soldiers assembled for the Trojan War was far less than what they had come to know in the navies of the 5th Century.²⁴

²³ Luce, J.V., *The End of Atlantis*, St Albans, 1969, 97.

²⁴ Thuc., I, 10.

The idea of a Minoan thalassocracy is beset with problems. Perhaps the solution is to not consider the Minoans as rulers of the Aegean whose mighty ships plied the waters aggressively defending trading vessels and coastal towns, but rather as the most active maritime nation in the Aegean. The term thalassocracy is misleading with connotations of oppression and dominance. The logistics of this appear to be far outside the scope of a Bronze Age civilisation, whose resources would probably not have been able to produce the number of ships needed to control the Aegean or indeed the men to row them. At the same time the Minoans do appear to have actively initiated their own trade, which means they must have had some ships at their disposal, and at various intervals these might have amounted to sizeable fleets for the age. There is also little to indicate that the Minoans differentiated between battle ships and trading vessels. In the Ship Procession fresco the one ship under sail appears to be loaded with cargo, but there is little discernible difference between the construction of this vessel and the others in the ceremony. Even in the Classical period, triremes which were built for war were converted into merchant vessels once they deteriorated. It is likely that in the Bronze Age there was no difference between the two and cargo ships were possibly manned by a few mercenaries or soldiers along with combat-capable seamen to protect themselves from pirates. Thucydides himself notes that the sailors in the boats en route to Troy were both rowers and combatants.²⁵ In their single tiered, open-decked ships they could be nothing else.

The Minoans do not appear to have had a particular enemy from which they would have needed protection. There is no indication that they actively pursued a policy of colonisation or conquest. The highly Minoanized centres such as Akrotiri and Phylakopi appear to be so due to close cultural contact or perhaps “settlement colonies”. There is no evidence that they were violently subjected to

²⁵ Thucydides, I, 10

Minoan rule. The Minoans were wealthy enough to embark on trading missions, which would have taken them into the Southern Aegean (there is little evidence of the Minoans venturing past Euboea) and the Eastern Mediterranean. The Cyclades do not seem to have been in the same position. While they would undoubtedly have had some ships, their numbers would not have rivalled the Minoans who had both timber and wealth to construct fleets. Minoan ships could possibly have been a fairly common sight in the Aegean and many settlements may have allowed them to make landfall without fear of invasion and thereby replenish their supplies.

While it is probable that any vessel that took sail in the Mediterranean during the Bronze Age would have taken the opportunity to plunder the ships they met en route to their destinations, there must have been some loosely formed rules. Firstly that it does not make sense to plunder settlements you will need for supplies later. Those areas could well have been protected from marauders if the ships were capable of doing so to help strengthen these ties. A collection of friendly allies along trade routes would have been essential. Similarly it is unlikely that the seafarers would have attacked allied vessels if they came across them, although this is not impossible, especially if there were no survivors after the raid.

One of the gravest dangers facing any sailor would undoubtedly have been piracy. For as long as there have been ships there have been pirates. There is of course little information on piracy in the Bronze Age. The references by Herodotus and Thucydides suggest, correctly, that its existence was an unquestioned side effect of sea travel. For some communities this practice would have supplemented the income gleaned from agriculture and trade or in some settlements one can presume that agriculture supplemented plunder gained from piracy. It was probably also a measure of strength and courage. In warrior societies, such as that of the Mycenaeans, acts of piracy were probably bragged about and turned into song for the halls of the palaces. Piracy in the Bronze Age should not

be viewed in the same light as the well-known AD 18th Century tradition. Pirates were not notorious outlaws but simply communities or ship crews seizing an opportunity, or a band of dislocated individuals grouped together for mutual gain.

One can imagine that the Cyclades were havens for pirates and it seems to be a natural occupation for members of communities who did not benefit from the direct trading routes. The Mycenaeans were probably equally guilty, especially during the beginning of the Late Bronze Age when their civilisation began to develop. Their apparent involvement with the Peoples of the Sea during the thirteenth century helps to substantiate this theory. Even individual Minoans not tied into the trading machinery of the palace could have resorted to piracy as a means of income. There are probably two divisions in piracy. The first would have been opportunistic, when ships fell upon each other if they stumbled across their paths. The second involved premeditated raids not only on trade vessels but also on coastal communities. While we cannot know much about the piracy of the Bronze Age we can surmise that it was a common practice and goods distributed by pirates may appear to be trade items to archaeologists. Therefore not all settlements that show even a reasonable level of Minoan goods were necessarily trading partners or even along the trade routes used by Minoan sailors.

Another aspect of piracy was the trade in people. There is no record of slavery in Minoan Crete although it is common in Egypt and the Levant. The lists of personnel in the Linear B tablets could well be possessions of the palaces and temples, in other words slaves.²⁶ It is therefore probable that slaves were present in Minoan Crete. Slave trade, whether they were prisoners of war or collected from raids on towns, was probably just as profitable as trade in inanimate objects and the market just

²⁶ Lists of personnel include such entries such as “Seven Corn-Grinding women, ten girls, six boys” from PY Aa62. Other entries are much longer which catalogue people and their work assignments. There are also offerings to gods such as “To Zeus one gold bowl, one man.” It is not certain if this man was a sacrifice or a servant. Finley, M.I., *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, London, 1981, 200-201.

as demanding. If these slaves were skilled artisans it could also help to explain the spread of high quality imitations of Minoan pottery on the Greek Mainland, the Cyclades and the Levant.

Finally the lack of evidence of ships from Egypt and the Levant sailing further than Crete during the Minoan period could also be seen as evidence of a thalassocracy, perhaps the most compelling of all. It is possible that an agreement existed between the Keftiu and the nations of the east that trade into the Aegean was the sole right of the Keftiu. It is possible, but on the whole unlikely. There are no records in either Egypt or the Levant that recognise Minoan proprietorship. The lack of eastern traders in the Aegean may have more to do with demand. During that time there may have been little incentive to travel beyond Crete. The mainland could supply silver from Laurion but little else. Silver appears to have travelled to Crete via Ayia Irini, who then supplied the metal to the east.

In all, the Minoan thalassocracy is unquestionably non-existent if one were to compare it to later antiquity and more modern periods. The idea of it stamping out piracy in the Aegean would have been impossible. The area was too vast and there would have been too many places sheltering pirates to make the idea conceivable. It is possible that the Minoans launched attacks on those settlements which partook in piracy or harboured pirates. It is also likely that some armed men travelled in trading vessels to help protect the cargo and crew. The crew themselves would not have been totally helpless in this situation. It is perhaps better to abandon the term thalassocracy and judge Minoan naval prowess in comparison to her neighbours in the Aegean.

The Bronze Age Shipwrecks

There have been two significant wreck discoveries, both dated to the Late Bronze Age. The Cape Gelidonya, excavated in 1960, is the younger of the two and probably sank in about 1200BC. Its cargo was mainly copper in all three forms of ingots, among them were thirty four copper oxide

type. In addition to the ingots were the remnants of tin ingots and scrap metals, presumably for resmelting, a number of weapons and tools as well as weights for trade. In comparison to the Uluburun wreck its finds were poor, but it led to the Bass's first postulation that maritime trade in the Late Bronze Age was led by Canaanites not Mycenaeans.

The Uluburun wreck has been mentioned several times in the preceding chapters. While this wreck has been dated to the Mycenaean period its value in understanding Bronze Age shipping and trade is enormous. The wreck has been dated to around 1305BC, based on the dendrochronology of presumably freshly cut firewood found among the remains.²⁷ This date was originally placed at 1318BC +/- 2 but was brought down to 1305BC on re-evaluation.²⁸ No bark was found on the log so it is possible that some of the rings have worn away which might give the wreck a later date, possibly 1300BC. Some doubt has been thrown on the Anatolian dendrochronology due its lack of sequential dating such as that which can be found in the United States, Germany or Ireland for example. While a large amount of research has been done on this subject the sequences established there appear to have a discrepancy of a few years with their European counterparts.²⁹ The vessel was fully laden and its loss would have been keenly felt. Unlike the Cape Gelidonya, the Uluburun wreck was laden with goods of an almost royal proportion. The wreck has yielded about ten tons of copper in both oxhide and bun shapes and almost a ton of tin in ingots and ingot fragments. For some kind of perspective the total number of copper ingots found at Uluburun exceed the combined hoards of museums and private collections in Cyprus, Greece, Sardinia, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States. In addition to the ingots and fragments a large amount of metal scrap has also been found,

²⁷ Pulak, C., "Dendrochronological Dating of the Uluburun Ship", *INA Quarterly*, 23, 1, 1996, 12-13.

²⁸ Bass, G., "Sailing between the Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium BC", *Aegeum* 18, 1997, 184 & 190.

²⁹ Wiener, M.H., "Discussion on Bass' Sailing between the Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium BC", *Aegeum* 18, 1997, 190.

plainly intended for resmelting.³⁰ This could possibly indicate that there was a smith on board the vessel. The tin does not yet have a traceable source, but the copper appears to have come from Cyprus.³¹

Another Cypriot connection is the fine ware found in large storage containers. Although the Cypriot pottery was ubiquitous and formed the largest group of manufactured wares, there were others of a wider variety, mainly from the Levant. 149 Canaanite amphorae were found filled with terebinth resin from the *Pistacia terebinthus*, a common tree in the eastern Mediterranean. This resin appears to be one of the key ingredients in the production of perfume and possibly another valuable commodity. It has been identified as the word *ki-ta-no* in the Knossos Linear B tablets, which catalogues more than 10 000 litres of the resin in one record.³² In addition to the resin a great number of opercula shells, also used in the production of ancient incense were found aboard the ship.³³ Other interesting finds included a number of cobalt blue glass ingots. Not only are these the earliest ingots found, but they match the chemical composition of the blue glass found in both Egypt and Mycenaean Greece. The earliest example of a diptych, two wooden leaves coated in wax and closed by means of a hinge, was also found. Studies on similar articles found at terrestrial sites have shown that this was combined with about 25% of orpiment, a mineral which was also found stored in an amphora on the ship.³⁴ A diptych is mentioned in the Iliad, but this had generally been considered an anachronism until this discovery.³⁵ Logs of African blackwood (*Dalbergia melanoxylon*) which the Egyptians termed ebony, elephant tusks, hippopotamus teeth and Mycenaean amber beads (which may have belonged to some of the unfortunate passengers) were also among the luxury goods being transported in the vessel.

³⁰ Bass: 1997, 191.

³¹ Gale, N. H., "Copper Oxhide Ingots: Their Origin and their Place in the Bronze Age Metals Trade in the Mediterranean", *BA Trade*, 1991, 229.

³² Bass: 1987, 727.

³³ Bass: 1987, 729.

³⁴ Bass: 1987, 731.

³⁵ *Il.* VI, 169.

The ship had a strong connection with Syro-Palestine, which has led the excavator, George Bass, to suggest that it was built in that region. He has gone on to state that the Phoenician maritime power, which was thought to have begun at the turn of the millennium, came into being during the Bronze Age. The wide distribution of Mycenaean artefacts throughout the Aegean, the Levant and Egypt have brought about theories of Mycenaean maritime exploits. However, Bass states that while there is ample evidence of sea trade with the Syrians, i.e. the cities of Ugarit and Byblos, with illustrations of their vessels in Egypt and mention in Egyptian records, nothing of the kind exists for Mycenaean trade.³⁶ He speculates instead that the Syrians were the naval power in the Aegean and transported all manner of goods throughout the area even as far as Italy. At the same time the passengers and crew of the ship seem to have been multicultural, possibly suggesting that there were stronger ties between the areas than originally thought. A possible flaw in this argument is the fact that the Mycenaean appear to have established colonies on various islands. There is also little doubt that the Mycenaean came to dominate Crete. How did this come about if they had no fleet, unless the attacks were assisted by the Syrians perhaps to remove a trade rival?

The wreck is however securely dated in the Mycenaean period and its relevance to Minoan trade is through inference only. There is no certainty that the conditions which existed in the fourteenth century prevailed 200 years earlier, although trends changed very slowly in antiquity. The main difference, if Bass's theory is correct, is that the Mycenaean were not actively involved in maritime trade and the Minoans were. Bass makes a clear distinction between the Minoan traders who appear in illustrations and possibly even had some presence in Egypt, and the Mycenaean.³⁷ It is likely however that the methods in lading the vessels and the commodities shipped did not change much,

³⁶ Bass: 1997, 186-187.

³⁷ Bass: 1997, 187.

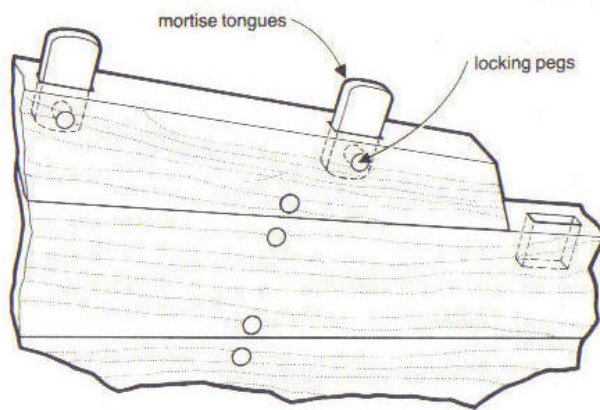
with the exception of newer items invented or introduced by the Mycenaeans, such as Baltic amber which became a Mycenaean speciality and glass, which has only been found in very limited quantities in Minoan contexts.

Some things are therefore notable about the Uluburun wreck which can be suggested for Minoan shipping and trade. The hull remains from the wreck have shown the vessel was created with the use of mortise and tenon joints, a technique which was thought to have only developed in about the 8th century (*fig. 1*).³⁸ It was first speculated that the Cape Gelidonya was built in a similar way but the remains of the hull were too fragmentary to make a firm conclusion. There can be no doubt about the construction of the Uluburun wreck, part of whose hull has been preserved. This technique was possibly used by the Minoan shipwrights as well. The dunnage of thorny burnet (*Sarcopoterium spinosum*) trees used in the wreck and mentioned in Homer's *Odyssey* was probably also used in Minoan vessels. The ship also used large pithoi for storage, not only of water, but fine ware pottery and organic goods such as oil, which may have been consistent with Minoan loading. Aside from the dunnage the organic remains found on the wreck consist mostly of pomegranate and fig seeds, olives (some 2 500 olive pits were found in one Canaanite jar) and coriander seeds. Both pomegranates and coriander could also have been used in the perfume industry. The remains of nuts and condiments, such as spices have also been located, although it is currently difficult to determine whether these were part of the cargo or for crew consumption.³⁹ The few barley and wheat kernels found were probably part of the shipboard diet rather than items of trade. Wheat, being something of a cash crop, is more likely a trade item than barley. However the Mari tablet which lists grain coming from Kaptar indicates that trade in grain did indeed occur, unfortunately it cannot be ascertained for certain what type of grain was exchanged.⁴⁰

³⁸ Bass: 1997, 189

³⁹ Haldane: 1993, 356-357.

⁴⁰ Knapp: 1991, 21 & 37; Strange: 1980, 101-102.



Mortise and tenon joints for hull planks

Figure 1 (From Severin: 1985, 46).

Trade therefore appears to have been conducted in mainly raw materials. Copper was, as we have seen on both the wreck and the preceding chapters, extensively traded. This was also evident in the Cape Gelidonya wreck where copper, also apparently originating from Cyprus, formed a large proportion of its cargo. Tin also was important and more scarce. The Uluburun wreck contained about one tenth the amount of tin in relation to its cargo of copper, coincidentally, or perhaps not, the correct ratio to make tin bronze. The terebinth resin, coriander and pomegranates appear to be the raw materials for the production of perfume, clearly an considerable industry during the Mycenaean era, as indicated by the Pylos tablets. This was probably also true of Minoan Crete. A substance resembling terebinth resin was found in a stirrup jar from the Cape Gelidonya wreck, suggesting that the stirrup jars were used for scented oils.⁴¹ Oil was used for bathing in the Classical era, however there is currently absolutely no evidence to suggest that this practice extended back into the Bronze Age. At the same time the quantities of perfumed oil mentioned by the Pylos tablets, a minimum of almost 1200 litres, does allow for a certain amount of speculation on this usage.

⁴¹ Haldane: 1993, 354; see also Chapter 3, 119-120.

The wide variety of goods in the wreck is also striking, although to be expected. The vessels which plied the Mediterranean would have been opportunistic and traded desirable goods over a vast geographical area. Assuming the vessel originated from a Syro-Palestine port, such as Ugarit or Byblos, as suggested by Bass it may have intended on travelling a circular route from the Levant on to Cyprus, where it collected its copper supplies and then along the Southern coast of Anatolia, where it sank near the island of Kas. If this had not happened, perhaps its journey would have continued through the Cyclades to the Greek mainland. The presence of a Mycenaean crew or passengers implies this may have been one of its destinations. In Greece it possibly would have traded some of its copper, tin, glass and terebinth products. From there the vessel possibly intended on travelling to Crete, now a Mycenaean centre and then on to the voracious Egyptian market taking advantage of the favourable winds from the island. Perhaps most of its cargo was intended for Egypt. The proposed route of the wreck is pure speculation. During the height of the Minoan civilisation the ship would probably have bypassed Greece and sailed from Anatolia to Crete, probably via Rhodes. Crete seems to have been the gateway to the Aegean and traffic from the Eastern Mediterranean appears to have halted at there. Commodities were carried into the islands and the mainland by Minoan or perhaps Cycladic merchants. With Crete now under the rule of the Mycenaeans these ships appear to have travelled to the Greek mainland. Bass makes the distinction between what appears to be the royal cargo aboard the Uluburun wreck and that of the less wealthy Cape Gelidonya, which appears to be a privately owned merchant vessel. This is worth noting. It is also possible that a large proportion of the cargo of the Uluburun wreck formed an Egyptian *inw* or gift, such as those mentioned in the Amarna letters. A letter from the King of Alashiya to Amenhotep III of Egypt mentions a very similar gift, although it would be very unlikely that this vessel held the king's promised cargo. On this type of voyage one would expect a direct sailing to its destination not a trade expedition throughout the Aegean.

“Thus (speaks) the King of Alashiya to the king of Egypt, my brother ...

And (with) that (present) I have sent you, by my messenger,

100 (talents of) copper. Moreover, may your (i.e. the Egyptian king’s) messenger bring (the following) goods: one bed of ebony (decorated in) gold

One *shuhitu*-chariot, (decorated) with gold; and two horses; and two pieces of linen; and 50 linen shawls; and two linen gowns; and 14 (beams) of ebony and 17 *habannatu*-jars of good (perfumed?) oil; [and] from the royal linen, four pieces and four shawls.”

El Amarna Letter 34: 1-2, 16-26⁴²

One of the more exciting developments in the understanding of Minoan trade is the discovery of the remains of some scattered cargo from a Middle Minoan wreck near the islet of Pseira off the east coast of Crete. These were located during underwater and geophysical surveys in September 2003 and June 2004. Before these finds no Minoan cargo has been located underwater and the potential of this wreck site is vast. While the exploration of these remains is still in its infancy the well-preserved pottery and storage containers so far retrieved is very promising. The finds currently at the Sitia Museum for restoration include intact amphorae, storage jars, spouted jars and lekanes.⁴³

Minoans in Literature and Art

With the fairly large volumes of trade between the Minoans and the East it would be surprising if these people were not mentioned by their more literate neighbours. The ancient texts are littered with obscure peoples and places, whose origins have long been forgotten. Among these are the Keftiu in Egyptian texts. The relationship between Keftiu and people of Aegean origin was noticed at the

⁴² Knapp: 1991, 21.

⁴³ Hadjidaki, E., Abstract of Seminar chaired by J.A. MacGillivray, Athens, October 2004.

beginning of the last century by Hall, shortly after the discovery of the Minoan civilisation itself, in his examination of the officials' tombs at Thebes, Egypt.⁴⁴ The main similarities are the physical appearance of the figures, their clothing and the wares that they carry. Not all the figures are readily identified as Aegean, with some appearing to be Syrians consequently leading to a debate on the origin of the characters and the Keftiu themselves. Physically the Aegean men (only men appear in the frescoes) are depicted as being dark red, which is the same colour the Egyptians use for their own men. The men in the frescoes from Crete and Thera are of a similar hue. The Egyptian illustrations show the men as being clean-shaven with long or medium locks of hair. They are also often shown with curled forelocks. These hairstyles appear to be consistent with the Minoans' own depictions. Their garments generally consist of a single loincloth held at the waist by a broad belt. The appearance of a codpiece in the front appears to have been misinterpreted. More likely it is the front of the loincloth attached to the belt.⁴⁵ In the tomb of Mencheperresonb and the second phase of Rekhmire they are depicted with kilts which come to a point at the front.

There are nine tombs which feature frescoes with an apparent Aegean presence or mention the Keftiu. They occur from the reigns of Hatshepsut to Amenhotep II. The tombs are not of the Pharaohs themselves but rather their officials who appear to have had some dealings with the Keftiu. The earliest is the tomb of Senmut (Tombs 71 and 353), (Plate 30), the "Steward of Amun" under the reign of Queen Hatshepsut (ca. 1478-1458). Both his tombs were desecrated, which may indicate he fell out of favour with the queen after the death of her husband, Thutmose II or perhaps after her elevation into the position of pharaoh. In tomb 71 there is a fresco that features three Aegean porters. This illustration has been badly preserved since its discovery and during the middle of the eighteenth

⁴⁴ Hall, H.R., "Keftiu and the Peoples of the Sea" in *BSA* 8, 1901-1902, 157-188; "The Keftiu Fresco in the Tomb of Senmut" in *BSA* 10, 1903-1904, 154-157; "An Addition to the Senmut Fresco", *BSA* 16, 1909-1910, 254-257; Wachsman, S., *Aegeans in the Theban Tombs*, Leuven, 1987, 1.

⁴⁵ Wachsmann: 1987, 43.

century AD there were three more. As the earliest known illustration of Aegean gift bearers it is possible that they served as a source for later artists.⁴⁶ The image that remains shows the three porters bearing two disproportionately large Vapheio cups.

The second tomb in a chronological sequence, that of Puimre (Tomb 39), (Plate 31), who served under Hapshepsut and Thutmose III (c. 1479-1425), shows foreign donors for a building project standing among gold rings. They have the dark skin and distinguishing features of the Keftiu, but wear Syrian tunics.⁴⁷ The tomb of Intef (Tomb 155), who served under the same rulers, also does not impart much information. The fresco shows tribute or gifts from Syrians and “Oasis” people. The Aegean presence is identified only by a pair of sandals, (Plate 30).⁴⁸

The tomb of Useramen (Tomb 131), vizier to Thutmose III during the early part of his reign, is the first to have an entire row dedicated to the Aegean gift-bearers. (Plate 32). Their wares are limited to only eight items. They are dressed in the same manner as that of the tomb of Senmut, with the breechcloth and sandals. The inscription notes that the procession is “reception of the spoils which the might of His Majesty brought from the Northern Countries, the confines of Asia and the Islands in the Midst of the Sea ...”.

Mencheperresonb (Tomb 86) served under Thutmose III and Amenhotep II (c. 1427-1401) as the first prophet of Amun (Plate 33). His tomb also shows a full register of Aegean porters preceded by three Syrian figures, one prostrate, one kneeling and the last standing. They appear in the second register of the same fresco, introducing a procession of Syrian gift-bearers. The reason for their presence is unknown. It is possible that they indicate the ritual involved when furnishing gifts and their function

⁴⁶ Wachsmann: 1987, 27-28.

⁴⁷ Wachsmann: 1987, 29-30.

⁴⁸ Wachsmann: 1987, 31.

in the illustration of the Keftiu was merely the inclusion a standard feature. The procession is not as detailed as the proceeding tomb of Rekhmire, quite possibly due to carelessness on the part of the artist. He is clearly aware of the Aegean footwear, but utilises it in only two figures. The other seven figures go barefoot.⁴⁹ The attire of the Aegean gift-bearers has changed from loincloth to kilt, but the other physical distinguishing features of hair and body colour remain.

The most detailed tomb showing foreign tribute is that of Rekhmire (Tomb 100) (Plate 34). Rekhmire was the nephew of Useramen and served as vizier and governor of the town during the reign of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II. His tomb is more or less contemporary with that of Mencheperresonb, although Wachsmann believes it is the later of the two.⁵⁰ His tomb shows the vizier receiving the goods on behalf of Thutmose III. The fresco is divided into five registers. Four depict foreigners bringing gifts and the fifth is reserved for tribute from prisoners. The four groups of foreigners have been said to represent the lands from all four compass points, with the “Keftiu and the Isles in the Midst of the Sea” (register II) characterising the nations in the west. The employment of the name Keftiu in conjunction with the mention of the “Isles in the Midst of the Sea” has sparked some debate over the identity of these two nations or indeed if they are two nations. Davies believed that they were a single people, whereas Vercoutter postulated that they may be two different geographic entities, but indivisible culturally.⁵¹ Strange, however, believes that they are completely separate, with Keftiu actually referring to Cyprus. Another interesting aspect of the Rekhmire tomb is the change of garb in the Keftiu register. The clothing was originally painted in the same manner as that of Senmut and Useramun, but later changed to resemble the apparel of the people in the tomb of Mencheperresonb. This may possibly indicate a change of leadership from Minoan to Mycenaean.

⁴⁹ Wachsmann: 1987, 33-35.

⁵⁰ Wachsmann: 1987, 35-37.

⁵¹ Davies, N. de G., *The Tomb of Rech-mi-re at Thebes*, New York, 1943, Vol I, 22-23.

Vercoutter, J., *L’Egypte et le Monde Egeen Prehellenique*, Cairo, 1956, 56-64.

Strange: 1980, 45-50.

The three remaining tombs (Amenemhab, Tomb 85; Kenamun, Tomb 93 and Anen, Tomb 120) mention Keftiu, but representations show Syrians or a hybrid of the two. It is possible that the artists did not know the difference between the two areas. They cannot be used as an aid in understanding Egyptian relations with Crete. The information that the rest of the tombs impart raises several questions. Who were the Keftiu? Were they the same as the Isles in the Midst of the Sea? Why was the raiment of the Keftiu changed in the Rekhmire tomb? What do the representations tell us of the relationship between Egypt and the Keftiu? And lastly how do the commodities shown in the Egyptian registers relate to those assumed to be traded in Crete? The Egyptian word Keftiu has found parallels in other literature as well. In Semitic it appears as Kaptara, known from the Mari tablets, texts from Ugarit mention Kptr or KUR. DUGUD. RI (read as Kabturi). There is even a Greek Καβδηρος.⁵² There are 58 texts, including the Theban tombs mentioned above, which mention this nation. Many are not contemporary documents with the most recent dating from AD 300 and a good number are of dubious value. Still some do exist which offer enormous value in our understanding of the Keftiu, their relationships in the East and their trading methods and commodities.

The identification of the Keftiu with the Minoans in Crete is of course fundamental to this discussion. Most scholars endorse the designation, but it is not unanimous, with some such as Strange and Merrillees advocating the island of Cyprus.⁵³ Strange has attempted to isolate the “Isles in the Midst of the Sea” and Keftiu stating that the two are unrelated. The Aegeans, which are so clearly represented in the Theban tombs are from the Islands, with the Keftiu being of a completely different extraction. One of the more important documents in identifying the Keftiu is the topographical list from a statue base in the forecourt of Amenhotep III funerary temple (Plate 35). This inscription

⁵² Strange: 1980, 12.

⁵³ Strange: 1980, 45-50; Merrillees, R. S., Review: “Caphtor/Keftiu. A New Investigation, by J. Strange” in *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus*, 1982, 244-253.

depicts two Syrian prisoners in the centre with twelve place names on the right and two on the left. The names on the right, Keftiu and Tinay, appear to be headings and related to the names on the left. These places, listed below, are well known in Aegean culture, but are mentioned for the first time in Egyptian inscriptions.

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 1) Amnisos | 2) Phaistos | 3) Kydonia |
| 4) Mycenae | 5) Tegai | 6) Messani |
| 7) Nauplia | 8) Kythera | 9) Ilios |
| 10) Knossos | 11) Amnisos | 12) Lyktos |

The origin of this list is uncertain. It has been argued that the list is contemporary with Amenhotep III (ca. 1382-1344 BC). There is however a host of conflicting information which seems to both deny and affirm Amenhotep III's relationship with the Aegean. Firstly a lack of Aegean pottery at Amenhotep III's royal city of Malkata seems to imply that there was a decline in trade until it is renewed with great vigour during the reign of Akhenaton (1352-1336 BC). Amenhotep III therefore would seem to have had little contact with the Aegean and the appearance of the inscription seems almost coincidental. At the same time these names appear for the first and last time on this inscription. The Egyptian habit of usurping their predecessor's achievements does not seem to have occurred here. The record of these sites appears to belong solely to the reign of Amenhotep III. There are more datable Egyptian goods on the Greek mainland during the reign of Amenhotep III than at any other time. Egyptian plaques and goods with the cartouche of Amenhotep III and a scarab of his queen have been found at Mycenae. The Pharaoh's scarabs have also been located at Kydonia and Sellopoulo near Knossos.⁵⁴ This would indicate that there was some connection between the Mycenaeans and Egypt, although there can be no certainty that these goods did not arrive indirectly.

⁵⁴ Wachsmann: 1987, 97.

Similar scarabs have been found at both Cyprus and Rhodes. However Cline believes that these goods, especially those found at Mycenae rise beyond the miscellaneous items which sailors or traders may acquire during their travels and were possibly obtained through direct contact.⁵⁵

It has been proposed that the list represents an itinerary, not from Egypt, but Crete. The high percentage of Minoan names would support this. However it seems unlikely. Wachsmann states that the names when placed on a map travel the Aegean from Amnisos in a clockwise direction to the Greek mainland and on the Troad. The journey returns to Amnisos, thereby justifying the occurrence of this town twice in the list. This does seem to be a fairly logical explanation except that the order of travel on the Greek mainland does not seem efficient, with the supposed traveller skipping around the mainland in a haphazard fashion. There is also little to no evidence that the Minoans travelled as far north as Troy. Lastly one has to question the existence of a Cretan itinerary in Egyptian hands, even if it did arrive in the days of Thutmose II and the flourishing era of trade with the Minoans. It may have existed as a source document, which supplied names of Aegean sites and could have been acquired quite innocently but was later used to demonstrate the supposed dominion of Amenhotep III.

The questionable source of the document does not detract from the information supplied in it. It does seem likely that the two individually placed areas were singled out as headings. Tinay's location is arguable, but may have been Rhodes. Keftiu may well mean the majority of the names of the list. Those in Crete, Kythera and possibly even the mainland may have been considered to be part of the Keftiu. Strange's belief that the Keftiu in the inscription was just another name in the list and unrelated to the Aegean culture appears to depend on two coincidences that seem improbable. Firstly that the only two names which had been mentioned in earlier Egyptian documents, namely Tinay and Keftiu were placed at the end of the list among the other, unknown names. Secondly that the artist ran

⁵⁵ Cline, E.H., discussion in Merrillees, R.S., "Egypt and the Aegean", *Aegeum* 18, 1997, 157.

out space on the base just as he needed to complete the last two names and was forced to place them on the right of the central engraving. Therefore the inscription may indeed have intended for the places on the left to be viewed in relation to two known areas on the right. Some of these areas, especially those in Crete quite possibly represent the Minoans, particularly when this evidence is examined alongside the visual depictions of the Keftiu in the tombs. Finally if the Keftiu are to be placed in Cyprus, then the site of Alashiya needs to be reviewed. This nomination is more disputable than that of the Keftiu. This site could either be Cyprus or possibly a place on the mainland. The identification of Alashiya has already been discussed and there is little to add.⁵⁶ At the moment it still appears the Cyprus or a city therein as the site of Alashiya is likely.

The relationship between the Keftiu and the Isles in the Midst of the Sea seems to be ambiguous. It is possible that this is the term which the Minoans used for themselves. This seems to be a somewhat impartial name for a nation, but that is probably a modern outlook and the possibility is certainly there. It may be that Vercoutter is correct in stating that the two are geographically separable but culturally linked.⁵⁷ The close association with the Minoans and some of the Minoanized Cycladic towns as mentioned above, may have involved some form of alliance. A loose entente may have existed between them, perhaps with the Minoans taking the lead thus accounting for the “Keftiu and the Isles in the Midst of the Sea”.

The extant evidence of Keftiu however tenuous, does seem to favour the identification of Crete rather than Cyprus. If this is true then the wares which are presented to the Pharaohs probably also represents Minoan or possibly Mycenaean goods, since it would seem that there was more contact between Egypt and Mycenae by the time of Amenhotep III’s reign. Of the nine tombs mentioning or

⁵⁶ Chapter 2, 76-77.

⁵⁷ Vercoutter: 1956, 56-64.

illustrating the Keftiu only four, namely Senmut, Useramun, Mencheperresonb and Rekhmire, can be used as evidence for Aegean wares. The final three as already mentioned appear to be mostly Syrian and should be discounted, the tomb of Intef is too badly damaged to be informative and that of Puimre does not depict goods.

The wares borne by the Keftiu can be divided into two groups, specifically finished goods and raw materials. It is not automatically guaranteed that the goods carried by the Keftiu are actually from Crete or the rest of the Aegean. The artists probably used pattern books from the Egyptian archives and had no knowledge of the Keftiu or their wares. Therefore they were not always reliably depicted and transference of goods, physical appearance and the like often occurs. The means of identifying legitimate Minoan goods amongst the wares carried by the Keftiu porters is twofold. The goods carried must resemble items found in Crete or positively identified Minoan exports and comparisons between the tombs must be conducted to ensure that the wares are similar. Those that appear common among other ethnic groups are possibly not Minoan gifts, but an example of transference from those people to the Keftiu.

Perhaps the most easily identified Minoan goods are the rhyta, both conical and theriomorphic. Stone conical rhyta are a common phenomenon in the Bronze Aegean, particularly Crete. Some have been carved in low relief such as the harvester rhyton from Hagia Triada and the sanctuary rhyton from Zakros. Many show traces of gold plate implying that they were once covered in this, perhaps as imitations of embossed metal originals.⁵⁸ The only metal one found thus far is the Siege Rhyton from Mycenae. The work on this may have been Minoan, but the scenes of warfare would definitely appear to be Mycenaean in spirit. Perhaps it was a commissioned piece or produced by a travelling Minoan artisan. In the Theban frescoes conical rhyta only appear in the tombs of Mencheperresonb and

⁵⁸ Higgins, R, *Minoan and Mycenaean Art*, London, New Revised Edition, 1997, 153.

Rekhmire, where they are not entirely accurately depicted. In general they appear as cones (Mencheperresonb, Register I, Figures 9 and 10; Rekhmire II, 2) or with a small base (Mencheperresonb I, 6; Rekhmire II, 12). The rhyton carried by figure 5 in Rekhmire's tomb has been slightly damaged and it is therefore difficult to tell if it has a base or not. The vessel does appear remarkably similar to that carried by figure 12 in the same register, which may indicate a base. The rhyton carried by figure 10 in Mencheperresonb's tomb is shown with two handles. Although this corresponds with an LMIa seal impression and a rhyton found at Phylakopi, it is far more common for these vessels to have just one handle or none at all. It is quite possible the addition of an extra handle was the invention of the artist himself.⁵⁹ The rhyton carried by figure 9 however would seem to be a depiction of the Minoan collared rhyton, such as the red marble example found at Zakros (Plate 36).

It may be significant that this particular rhyton is held upside down, suggesting that the vessel is empty and its value was the quality of the pottery rather than its contents. This must be fairly unusual. It cannot be denied that Minoan potters were far superior to their Egyptian counterparts and ceramics were probably imported into Egypt for their own sake, yet it must be assumed that most of the vases and jars depicted in the frescoes were filled with substances such as oil and wine. It is possible that instead of being a Minoan vessel the rhyton is actually an Egyptian *hs* vase, which is also conical without handles. It appears reversed in the tomb of Mery, another official in the Theban complex. Its representation as part of the Keftiu tribute may have been the result of transference.⁶⁰

There are a number of theriomorphic rhyta in the frescoes from Useramen, Mencheperresonb and Rekhmire. They occur in head shapes of bulls, jackals, lions and griffins. Based on the colouring of

⁵⁹ Wachsmann: 1987, 69.

⁶⁰ Wachsmann: 1987, 67-70.

white and yellow it would appear that most of these rhyta were made of silver and gold. The bull's head and horns of the rhyta from Useramen and Mencheperresonb have been drawn in profile as opposed to the regular Egyptian method of head in profile, but horns *de face*. This distinctly Minoan characteristic may suggest that the pattern book artist had seen the original product.⁶¹ The jackal is not a common Minoan symbol and, despite a dog-head rhyton having been found in a Minoan context, it is quite possibly a hybridisation of the Egyptian god, Anubis. By contrast the griffin is a common Minoan motif, but no Aegean prototypes in the shape of a rhyton have been found. There are examples of lion-head rhyta from Crete (Plate 36). There appear to be two types of theriomorphic rhyta in the tombs, those which have a vertical base and those with a horizontal base. Rehak notes that the Minoan rhyta have a vertical base (Plate 36) which is lacking in most of the Egyptian portrayals.⁶² It is also true that similar rhyta are carried by Syrians. Other finished goods carried by the Aegeans are large jars, metal bowls and a variety of jugs. Some of the porters bring swords, bolts of cloth and necklaces.

The raw materials consist of oxhide ingots, an ivory tusk, silver and a basket of lapis lazuli. The Keftiu appear carrying oxhide ingots only in the tomb of Rekhmire. It is far more common to find them borne by Syrians. In fact, in the Rekhmire fresco, the Syrians in register 4 carry ingots in the same place as that of the Keftiu, that is figure 5, 8 and 13/14. There is a slight discrepancy in the last character where the 13th Keftiu figure carries an ingot, but the 14th Syrian carries an ingot. This is quite possibly a case of the artist transferring information from the one ethnic group to the other. In this case probably from the Syrian register to the Keftiu. The ingots are shown in the fresco as already stacked in front of the procession as well as being carried by the *inw* bearers. Those accumulated at the front have been painted a grey colour which implies that they were of a different metal, possibly

⁶¹ Wachsmann: 1987, 57.

⁶² Rehak, P., "Aegean Natives in the Theban Tomb Paintings: The Keftiu Revisited", *Aegeum* 18, 1997, 46.

lead, silver or tin. There is evidence of the remains of tin oxide ingots from the Uluburun wreck, which may indicate the type of metal in the gifts to the Pharaoh.

Unfortunately the raw materials presented to the Pharaoh by the Keftiu are at odds with the evidence. It is true that copper oxide ingots have been found in a good number throughout Crete, particularly at Zakros and Hagia Triada. At the same time these are imports from an unknown source and they were probably collected along with other precious raw materials from the Levant. The only known mould for this shape has been found at Ras Ibn Hani, on the Syrian coast. This shape therefore would appear to be more closely tied to Syrian tribute bearers than the Keftiu. It is of course not impossible that such materials were brought to Egypt from Crete, especially if the fresco depicts a once-off shipment. The same argument holds true for the presentation of an elephant's tusk and a basket of lapis lazuli. A similar tusk was found at Zakros. Elephants are not native to Crete, but the Minoans had access to ivory, probably from Syria. Similarly lapis lazuli is imported from as far afield as Afghanistan and has only been found in very small quantities in Crete. Its uses cover small projects such as beads and seals. Larger works of art use blue glass paste for blue. It would certainly seem that the ivory and lapis lazuli found in Crete were for domestic use and export would have been unlikely. The source of Minoan silver was Laurion. As it would appear that at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age the Minoans monopolised the trade routes of the Eastern Mediterranean it is possible that the Minoans carried the silver from central depots such as Ayia Irini or Akrotiri to the east. Silver from the Laurion mines found at Egypt dates back to Middle Minoan times. It was also of great demand in Egypt, which lacked the raw material. Yet the quantities of Laurion silver found at Egypt are limited. Again the main supplier of this metal was the Syrians, who brought it from the Taurus mountains.

The historical value of the frescoes is therefore not clear-cut. The goods depicted are often hybridisations of both Egyptian and Syrian originals. The people and commodities involved in

ceremonies are for the most part copied from pattern books, with the artist having no knowledge of either. It is difficult to say whether the processions depicted an actual historical event or a symbolic one signifying the officials' duties. Status in ancient Egypt is measured by one's proximity to the Pharaoh. Therefore participation in such a ceremony at the side of the king must have been a most prestigious occasion, worthy of record in one's tomb. Since this is a personal edifice and not meant to honour the king or state, Panagiotopoulos feels that the historical accuracy is attested.⁶³ Yet the tombs are not without ambiguities. They lack a time frame almost implying that rather than one significant event the frescoes illustrate the scale of the officials' career. It is possible that the owners of the tombs participated in more than one such ceremony.⁶⁴ There is no evidence that the Keftiu were ever under the control of the Egyptians. The inscription from the tomb of Rekhmire proclaims that the chiefs of the Keftiu and the Islands in the Midst of the Sea are *inw* bearers who had heard of the Pharaoh's great might, not people who had been conquered. *Inw* is not necessarily tribute brought to the victorious king, but also a gift between rulers.⁶⁵ This is probably the case here.

For our understanding of Minoan trade these frescoes could be extremely misleading. The raw materials which the Keftiu carry appear to be unlikely exports from Crete. The finished goods show more promise. Some of the ceramic vessels can be clearly seen to have a Minoan origin, even if they have been distorted by the owners, such as the Vapheio cups in Senmut's tomb or the theriomorphic rhyta in Rekhmire's. Most of the vessels must have had contents such as wine and oil, which adheres to the theories in the trade of such products. Likewise the other finished goods appear to confirm the hypothesis that Crete became a powerhouse of luxury goods. Their metalwork was unsurpassed and long swords, often for ceremonial use, have been recorded in the Mari texts. Textiles would also

⁶³ Panagiotopoulos, D., "Keftiu in Context: Theban Tomb-Paintings as a Historical Source", *OJA*, 20, 3, 2001, 269.

⁶⁴ Panagiotopoulos: 2001, 270.

⁶⁵ Chapter 3, 127-128.

appear to have been a Minoan commodity and its appearance among the Keftiu should not be surprising. The frescoes therefore appear to confirm what has been for the most part speculation, namely that the Minoans had contact with Egypt and that trade was conducted in the form of gift giving, although this is possibly only one of several types of trading arrangements.