

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The present study is a catalogue of the Egyptian material found in Bronze Age Minoan contexts, and that without archaeological context dating to Dynasty XX and earlier, found on the island of Crete, and an analysis of their impact on the island's Minoan culture. Relative chronology is now becoming well enough defined (although inevitably subject to further refinement) that it can be employed as the basis for further inquiry into other aspects of the material under consideration. The past decade, especially, of scholarship has made many inroads into the relative (and absolute) dating of both the cultural periods and the material remains of both civilisations. So many, in fact, that a complete re-analysis of the details and conclusions, reached only a decade ago in my Ph.D. thesis, has been necessary for the present study. The origin, development and decline of individual types of artefacts and images has become far more sharply viewed and better understood than in any previous decade, in both the Minoan and Egyptian civilisations.

The present study considers the effect these imported materials and images had on the cultural development of the island, as indicated by those Minoan artefacts having direct and/or indirect elements derived from Egyptian iconography and form. As such, it is heavily reliant on the relative chronology of these two civilisations, and others with which both also interacted, chiefly Cyprus and Syro-Palestine, although those in different regions of the mainland Near East are more tangentially involved.

After more than a century of excavation and research the number of imported Egyptian objects found on Crete remains small although, with the exception of imports to Crete from elsewhere in Greece, the numerical quantity found is greater than from any other contemporary culture. Relatively speaking, therefore, these are imported objects found in good number. They were transported to Crete from further shores, and obviously must have been valued by the recipients. Their presence on the island should have effected some social, cultural and economic impact on the Minoan culture.

This impact is underlined by the presence of indigenous material having features or motifs directly derived from genuine imports, or which are alien to the Minoan artistic repertoire but have recognisable Egyptian parallels or antecedents.

These artefacts were created within the Minoan cultural sphere for its own specific requirements, and those stylistic motifs having Egyptian prototypes must have been adopted for some specific reason(s), whether consciously or not. But did their Egyptian *raison d'être* carry over to Minoan expression, and to what extent did the Minoans understand, copy, adapt, combine or ignore them to create their own? Central to this question is the role of the artist/craftsman and his environment, and related to it is the degree and means of interaction between the two cultures during the various periods.

Such a study cannot be investigated without a firm grasp on the material itself, or as much as can be ascertained from the archaeological record. Some objects are incompletely published, and others no longer extant or available for direct study. Many – too many – are entirely without context, and others are from secondary contexts having no relationship to the immediate period concerned. For this study, I have attempted to include as complete an object and context description as possible, and to handle and record the material personally when available. Often I have found discrepancies and incomplete data in the published record of the artefact, and can only surmise a similar situation for the contextual information. However, much information contained in the present catalogue of necessity has been extracted from the published record, supplemented or replaced when more complete or accurate data are known to me.

The major discussion is divided into two groups, artefact types and iconographical images. There is no particular order to the chapters as presented, except that artefact types are discussed before iconographical images. The problems and methodology of these two groups are quite different, by the very nature of the material involved. Artefact types are three-dimensional material 'things' of a certain type, and their corpus is delimited by shape, material and scale. Iconographical images, in contrast, are either three-dimensional artefacts or two-dimensional renderings of the image, a particular and not necessarily tangible creation; their corpus is limited only by the presence of the image itself. Each artefact type and iconographical image is considered in its chapter as an individual and separate entity, and the whole discussed in the concluding chapter.

The catalogue and major discussion is limited to Egyptian and ‘egyptianising’ material – that is, Minoan-made objects or Minoan iconography initially originating from, or inspired by, the Egyptian. I use the term ‘derivation’ rather than ‘imitation’ for this material, for the latter word implies directly slavish copying rather than the multiple possible variations of a general ‘egyptianising’ theme developed from a non-Egyptian outlook and understanding. The types considered in the present study were chosen initially for particular reasons. First and foremost is the inclusion of imported Egyptian material, and any Minoan parallels for them, together with Minoan material that visually appears to have an Egyptian character. The identification of material as ‘egyptianising’ is subject to degrees of interpretation and therefore to a certain extent is quite fluid. In the present study, those artefact types exhibiting direct influence (i.e., specific features or obvious overall derivations) are catalogued, however far removed from the original, together with objects having probable features or derivations but whose incomplete state does not allow positive identification. Other artefact types that have long and commonly been regarded as Egyptian or ‘egyptianising’ but in fact are not, have also been incorporated into the catalogue in order to demonstrate the fallacy of their identification as such, often still cited in the literature. Virtually all were included in PENDLEBURY’S *Aegyptiaca* (1930b) or other equally authoritative standard published references, and they are included here chiefly to demonstrate that they have not been forgotten or ignored in the present study. Those chosen for study in this volume undoubtedly could be (and, over time, will be) supplemented by others. However, objects earlier suggested to be of Egyptian origin but long recognised as indigenous or originating elsewhere without Egyptian influence are not included here, simply because it would be superfluous to double the size of the catalogue merely to redemonstrate the (by now) obvious.

Unless my research yielded contradictory results,

the opinions of WARREN (1969), YULE (1981; 1983) and PINI (2000) on the origins of individual stone vessels and scarab seals respectively were initially accepted and are critically analysed in this study; indeed, they often are the basis for inclusion in it. The question of identification as Egyptian or Minoan manufacture is inextricably tied to the much larger issues of stone vessels and seals they already have addressed for their type as a whole, and complete re-analysis on my part would in the main not only be unfruitful but also unwarranted. Nonetheless, I often have differed from their opinions.

Only certain aspects of the topic can be explored within the limits of single volume. It would take a lifetime and more to investigate fully the topic in all its details, some of which would remain as insoluble then as now. Some iconographical features are of a dubious or spurious ‘egyptianising’ character, e.g., the ‘ankh-axe’ motif and sphinx image.² Although discussed briefly in the body of the present study, they are not included in the catalogue for two reasons: the origin of many motifs thought to have some ‘egyptianising’ character or quality is, to my mind, a question insoluble to everyone’s satisfaction and there simply are too many examples to warrant inclusion of such an insubstantial subject. Those iconographical motifs included in the present study generally are figurative in nature, and originally were considered for investigation on the assumption that they indeed had some Egyptian origin, or at least had been generally accepted in publication to have this ultimate source. The present study is intended to focus on providing as firm a ground as presently possible for understanding the causes and results of Minoan adoption and adaptation of Egyptian objects and iconography, by documenting and analysing the material presented in the catalogue which, complete in itself, will provide a valuable tool for further study. The format of the present study often limits discussion to the general, and does not allow for minute examination of the many implications that can be extracted from the evidence presented.

¹ See YULE 1981:167–168. This and some other motifs originally were considered for inclusion in the present study, but initial investigation led to the conclusion that they did not belong within the context of this study.

² For the Near Eastern – not Egyptian – origin of the Aegean sphinx motif, see RHYNE 1970:*passim*. This identification

has been questioned by several authors, but is accepted for the present study. Nonetheless, the tail position wrapped around the haunch is an Egyptian trait rather than a Near Eastern one, but this equally could have developed on Crete through association with the seated cat image; see Chapter 15.

It does, however, provide the basis from which such examination will be possible.³

Note:

Hieroglyph code references correspond to the sign lists in GARDINER 1957:438–548 (Egyptian) and OLIVIER and GODART 1996:386–447 (Minoan).

EVANS (1909:181–231) published an earlier list of

Minoan hieroglyphic signs, some of which are not considered ‘hieroglyphs’ by Olivier and Godart. Those later included in the Olivier and Godart sign list are provided with that citation only, whilst the remainder have an Evans citation and can be recognised by the prefix ‘S.’ that Evans employed. Descriptive terminology (e.g., ‘leg’), used for convenience in the present study, also is as cited by Evans.

³ Some examples of this further examination are PHILLIPS 1992b; 2001; 2003; 2004; 2005a; 2005b.