



## **AEGEAN EMISSARIES IN THE TOMB OF SENENMUT AND THEIR GIFT TO THE EGYPTIAN KING**

Uroš Matic  
University of Münster

### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the representations of the objects brought by the Aegean emissaries depicted in the foreigners' procession scene in the tomb of Senenmut (TT 71). Through comparison of the depicted objects with the ones found in the Aegean it is argued that not only is it possible to find close analogies for single objects but also for the whole assemblage. The assemblage depicted in the tomb of Senenmut is found in elite burials of the Late Bronze Age I Aegean, and it can be interpreted as a diplomatic gift. The very fact that the same assemblage is found both in the Aegean princely burials and depicted in Senenmut's tomb, as a gift to the Egyptian king, is of great importance for the discussion on historicity behind this scene. The paper also discusses the transformation of the Aegean gift assemblage after its arrival in Egypt.*

### INTRODUCTION

The question of historicity of the New Kingdom foreigners' procession scenes,<sup>1</sup> in which foreigners are depicted bringing different materials, objects, animals and children to the Egyptian court, is crucial for understanding diplomatic relations between the Aegean and Egypt in the Late Bronze Age. Direct or indirect contacts between the Aegean and Egypt are well attested since the Old Kingdom.<sup>2</sup> However, Aegean objects exchanged on the highest diplomatic level with the New Kingdom Egypt court remain largely unknown. It is possible that one of the rare assemblages of such objects was deposited as an offering to the temple of Montu at Tod in Upper Egypt, probably during the reign of Thutmose III, as they show close relation to the objects from the Greek mainland in the Shaft Graves period.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the depictions of the Aegean emissaries and objects they bring to the Egyptian court are, besides presumably the Tod objects, our only source of information. The main problem is, however, how to approach them.

The first authors who dealt with these depictions interpreted them as "photographs," as representations of real physical traits of peoples and the objects they carry.<sup>4</sup> This kind of interpretation remained somewhat unchanged as even the most recent studies tend to see real physical characteristics behind these figures.<sup>5</sup> There are, however, a few scholars who have emphasized the necessity of

studying these scenes in the same way one should study all other Egyptian scenes, by concentrating on iconographical rules, patterns of representation, transference and decorum.<sup>6</sup>

On that note, the main question is if it is at all possible to interpret these representations as historical, bearing in mind the fact that they are embedded in Egyptian patterns of representation, decorum and ideology. According to Diamantis Panagiotopoulos the scenes can be viewed as "objective testimony of the depicted events."<sup>7</sup> This approach neglects the fact that these images are not simply pictorial signifiers of the real objects (the signified). These objects are, at least in the context of Theban tombs, rather emerging through representations. They are materialized through them and should also be approached as such.<sup>8</sup> Therefore one should be careful in arguing for objective testimonies behind Egyptian representations, but one should also not dismiss them entirely. This paper will argue how the presentation of the Aegean objects at the court was set according to the Egyptian ideology of kingship. The objectivity is thus reduced upon the arrival of objects in Egypt and further also through their representation according to Egyptian conventions.

It is often argued that the later depictions of the Aegeans in Theban tombs are moving further away from reality. This can certainly be said for the tomb of Amenemhab (TT 85), where the depictions of Syrian figures are bearing Aegean objects (among other things) and are

described in the accompanying text as coming from *kftjw*.<sup>9</sup> This occurrence of Syrian instead of Aegean figures in Aegean registers of foreigners' procession scenes was recently interpreted as a consequence of iconographic transference embedded in the cultural topography.<sup>10</sup> It is, however, questionable that the earlier scenes with Aegean emissaries gradually lose the reality behind them. In order to minimize the associated problematic as much as possible, the Aegeans and the objects they carry in the tomb of Senenmut will be used as a case study, as this is the earliest known tomb where they are depicted, although it would be interesting to apply the same method to later tombs. The tomb of Senenmut is located in Sheikh Abd el-Qurna in Thebes, and the beginning of its construction is dated to the reign of Hatshepsut.<sup>11</sup> Senenmut was a high official under Thutmose II and Hatshepsut, bearing many important administrative titles.<sup>12</sup>

If we are to come closer to some sort of an interpretative middle ground we ought to re-construct the contacts between the New Kingdom Egyptian court and the Aegean before they were transformed by the Egyptian decorum, both at the court, through the ideological setting of the processions, and in the representations. This paper therefore goes beyond the search for the closest analogies for the depiction of objects brought by the Aegean emissaries, as the closest analogies have already been proposed by several scholars after meticulous analyses.<sup>13</sup> The main aim is to explore the possibility of the existence of a "least common multiple" behind the representation of the Aegean emissaries and the objects they carry. So far, various analogies for the represented objects have been offered without paying closer attention to their archaeological contexts in the Late Bronze Age Aegean. It will be argued that not only it is possible to find appropriate analogies for individual objects, as was indeed already done, but for the whole represented assemblage in individual contexts. It is shown that three (sword, ewer, and Vapheio-type cup) out of four classes of objects of the Aegean origin depicted in the tomb of Senenmut appear together in burial contexts in the Aegean. This result and its consequences for historical interpretation of the procession scene from the tomb of Senenmut are discussed further in this paper.

#### THE *JNW* AS THE TRANSFORMED GIFT

The Aegean emissaries are in the Theban tombs depicted bringing ceramic, stone, and metal vessels, weapons, jewelry, textile, ox-hide ingots, ivory, etc. These objects are described as *jnw* by the accompanying inscriptions in the tombs of Useramun (TT 131), Menkheperreseneb (TT 86), and Rekhmire (TT 100).<sup>14</sup>

There is so far no other known Egyptian term except *jnw* used to describe the Aegean objects in the procession scenes, even when the figures themselves are Syrian but described as coming from the Aegean, e.g., the tomb of Amenemhab (TT 85).<sup>15</sup> This indicates that the Egyptian painters and scribes gave particular attention to the correct labeling of these representations. Similarly, in the procession scenes Syrian children are in almost all cases labeled as *jnw*, whereas Nubian children are labeled as *h3kw* or *skr-ʿnh*, indicating the different status of these children and the lands they come from.<sup>16</sup> This suggests more than a random system of signification that has to be acknowledged.

The term *jnw* is, however, understood differently by different scholars. There are those who interpret it as tribute,<sup>17</sup> which carries a connotation of obligation toward the Egyptian king with a background of submission to Egyptian rule. This is actually more appropriate interpretation of the term *b3kw*. The term *jnw* is also understood as supply on a denotative level of meaning<sup>18</sup> or as special deliveries.<sup>19</sup> Finally, there are those who interpret it as a gift, setting it into the context of gift exchange economy and the theories of Marcel Mauss.<sup>20</sup> According to the gift theory of Mauss, the gift exchange is based on reciprocal gifts and it is at the same time a social and a religious event, magical and economical, utilitarian and sentimental.<sup>21</sup> Gift giving is an act that creates and maintains social ties by making people feel they are obliged to return it.<sup>22</sup> Expectations of reciprocity are common for most gift giving. Most gifts are followed by a return gift at some point in time. The return gift should come neither too soon nor too late, because an early return gift can lower the significance of the exchange, and a late one can mean that the sender lacks respect and knowledge of the exchange rules.<sup>23</sup> The question is how much of the anthropological gift exchange theory can be recognized in behind the term *jnw*.

It has to be stressed that the Egyptians never depicted their king presenting something to a foreign ruler and returning the gift, as this was against the Egyptian decorum and ideology privileging the godly figure of the king. This does not mean that the Egyptian king did not take part in the Late Bronze Age gift exchange. We are well informed of him taking part in gift exchange in the Amarna letters.<sup>24</sup> Some even suggest there is evidence for an Egyptian embassy visiting Mycenaean Pylos, based on one of the Pylos wall paintings.<sup>25</sup> Looking carefully at the way *jnw* is described we notice that it is brought to Egypt on the backs of the foreigners (*jnw.sn hr psd.sn*) who kiss the soil (*sn t3*) with bent heads (*m w3h tpw*) or leaning toward (*m ksw*) and receiving the "breath of life" (*tʿw nj ʿnh*) from the Egyptian king for their *jnw*.<sup>26</sup> It is highly unlikely that the "breath of

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life" of one king would be seen as reciprocal to the gifts sent by the other. We are well informed that when some rulers tried to bend the rules of gift exchange the others complained, e.g., when the chariots sent as gifts are represented at the court as tribute.<sup>27</sup>

The foreign rulers, including a Syrian figure labeled as *wr n kftjw* ("Prince of Crete") in the tomb of Menkheperreseneb (TT 86), are depicted in proskynesis in the procession scenes. This does not necessarily mean that they were subjects to the Egyptian king as some authors suggest.<sup>28</sup> On the contrary, it has been previously stressed that proskynesis was just a part of the court procedure, a formal act not necessarily meaning political subjugation.<sup>29</sup> However, we can be sure that foreign kings who were not subjects of the Egyptian king sent emissaries instead of presenting themselves on the Egyptian court.<sup>30</sup> When the word *wr* ("prince or chief") is used to label the foreign figures in the procession scenes, we should either understand this as a consequence of Egyptian decorum and ideology<sup>31</sup> or think about expanding the definition of this word to emissaries, too. It was also suggested that the participants of the ceremonies did not see, and the visitors to the tombs could not know, that the Egyptian king also had to send gifts in return.<sup>32</sup>

The fact is that although the Egyptian king received gifts from other rulers he did not have to and indeed he did not represent them as such to his court during the processions.<sup>33</sup> These gifts did not have to be represented as such in the procession scenes in the tombs as well, where they could be seen also by individuals who did not attend the court ceremony.<sup>34</sup> We are well informed about this in

one of the Amarna letters (EA 1) in which the king of Babylon complains that his chariots were placed together with the chariots of the mayors and that they were not reviewed separately.<sup>35</sup> The consequence was that what he sent as a gift (*šulmānu*) was not reviewed as such at the Egyptian court. Through changing the setting of the objects their status was changed, and through changing the status of the objects the status of the sender was changed. Therefore it can be argued that the objects sent as gifts to the Egyptian king were transformed into something else, be that a tribute or something that is guaranteed to the Egyptian king by the will of gods and received during the New Year festivities. This is *jnw*, a gift transformed by Egyptian decorum.

The terminology used for goods brought or sent by foreigners to the Egyptian court also differs according to the level of control Egypt had over them. Namely, *h3kw* is a term used for war booty taken on the battlefield after the victory or by a plunder of an enemy city. The term *b3kw* is used for goods coming from lands under Egyptian administration, such as Nubia or parts of Syria-Palestine, while the term *jnw* is used for goods coming from regions that were not under Egyptian control.<sup>36</sup> The differentiation of goods and the terms used for them according to their land of origin and its status relative to Egypt is, however, not always applicable.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, we can safely argue that no political control over the Aegean existed comparable to the one over Syria or Nubia during the New Kingdom. There is no evidence either for military or for any other form of longer presence of the Egyptians in the Aegean. Additionally, Aegeans and Puntites are never



Figure 1: The Aegeans in the tomb of Senenmut (TT 71), drawing (after Harry Reginald Hall, *The Civilization of Greece in the Bronze Age* [London: Methuen and Co. Lt, 1928], 199).

depicted bringing children to the Egyptian court, contrary to Syrians and Nubians, which indicates complete political independence from Egypt.<sup>38</sup> The status of the Aegean can thus be compared roughly to the status of lands such as Babylon, Hati, Ugarit, and Assyria. These countries are in the Amarna letters attested as the senders of *šulmānu*. Therefore, it can be safely argued that the objects that were sent from the Aegean were also sent as gifts, although, as it was shown previously, they did not need to be represented as such on the Egyptian court.

#### THE AEGEAN GIFT

The Aegeans in the tomb of Senenmut are depicted in a foreigners' procession scene located on the western wall of the northwestern side wing of the transverse hall. There were originally six figures visible in the procession scene; now only the last three are preserved (Figures 1 and 2). The figures are moving from right to left towards a figure that is not preserved.<sup>39</sup> The non-preserved figure on the left was certainly Senenmut himself. All figures are men with red skin color and black hair with locks and curls of different length. They wear only a loincloth of cutaway form supported at the waist by a broad belt from which a quiver-like object hangs, representing a looped loincloth depicted frontally.<sup>40</sup>

The figures and objects they carry are, in this paper, going to be referred to according to their number from left to right, it being the case that the scene itself is oriented toward the left. The following are descriptions of objects with some comments on Egyptian patterns of representation and the analogies provided in the Aegean Bronze Age and New Kingdom Egyptian material culture (Figure 3).

The object carried by the first, now lost figure, seems to be either a dagger or a long tapering blade. If we assume that the Egyptian artist did not enlarge the size of the object, as is the case with some metal vessels, we can argue that we are dealing with a depiction of a sword. A dagger or a short sword is depicted being carried by one of the Aegean figures in the tomb of Rekhmire (TT 100). Here the weapon in question is shorter than that in the tomb of Senenmut and is depicted out of the scabbard. A rounded pommel is visible at the end of the handle, suggesting the Aegean origin of the weapon.<sup>41</sup> If we assume that the sizes of both weapons (in TT 71 and TT 100) are proportionally depicted, as seems to be the case, then we can identify the weapon in the tomb of Senenmut as a sword. Being that the depiction is not entirely preserved and lacks details, we cannot easily

identify the type of the sword carried by the figure. If it is indeed Aegean in origin, strictly chronologically and formally speaking it has to be an A- or B-type sword. The earliest appearance of the Type A sword can be dated to MM I-II on Crete and MH II on mainland.<sup>42</sup> Type B sword appears in MH III but is more often in LH I.<sup>43</sup> The fact that the size of the depicted sword cannot be taken as being its actual size warns us not to choose between Type A (longer) or Type B (shorter) blade. Swords of Type A are known in great number from Archaiochori in Crete and from Mycenae and Pylos on mainland Greece, whereas swords of Type B mostly come from the shaft graves of Mycenae.<sup>44</sup> However, there are those who argue that the sword is non-Aegean.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the depicted sword does not allow a secure identification, but it might well be Aegean.

The ewers carried by the second and the sixth figures in their left hands are tall, one-handled ewers with a short neck and shoulder. The colors used for depicting the ewer carried by the second figure are not known, but we can assume by comparison with the other ewer that it was also yellow-and-white colored. The ewer carried by the second figure has a fluted design from shoulder to the bottom. This type of design is more common for stone vessels in the Aegean, such as, e.g., Type II HL ovoid and Type III S conical rhyta, according to Robert B. Koehl.<sup>46</sup> The ewer carried by the sixth figure in his hand is depicted in white from the mouth to the half of the body, including the handle, and yellow farther down. It has a neck bulb on the change from neck to shoulder. One noticeable detail is the frontal way the Egyptian artist depicted the decoration on the surface of the handle as if it is located on its side. The form of these ewers is easily recognizable in the Aegean Bronze Age material as an ewer with one handle, neck bulb, and chased ornament in two variants (*Kannen mit Halswulst und getriebener Verzierung, Varianten A und B*) or as a piriform ewer with a shoulder band (*Piroforme Kanne mit Schulterband*). Although a vessel identical to the one depicted as being carried by the sixth figure has not been found in the Aegean, there are many similar ones. Close analogies for the neck bulb are found in those from shaft grave E (circle B) and shaft grave VI (circle A) in Mycenae.<sup>47</sup> The fishbone band decoration on the shoulder and on the surface of the handle has parallels, however, in the vessel from chamber tomb 4 at Sellopoulo.<sup>48</sup> These types of vessels occur in prototypes in MM III, with the latest examples dating to LM II and LM IIIA1.<sup>49</sup> All of these parallel vessels are made of bronze and not of silver and gold as the one carried by the sixth figure as suggested by the Egyptian color convention.<sup>50</sup> The ewer depicted in the left hand of the





Figure 2: The Aegeans in the tomb of Senenmut (TT 71), facsimile (after Nina de Garis Davies, *Ancient Egyptian Paintings I* [Chicago: Oriental Institute of Chicago Press, 1936], pl. XIV).

sixth figure thus has elements occurring on Aegean Bronze Age ewers with neck bulb and piriform ewers with a shoulder band fused in one vessel.

The bowl carried by the third, now lost figure, has a rounded profile, everted rim, and a high trumpet foot. According to Peter Warren, one very similar stone bowl is known from Zakro and dated to LM IB.<sup>51</sup> However, not only does the bowl carried by the third, and now lost, Aegean figure not have the shape of the vessel from Zakro, but it is also, according to the preserved drawing, clearly not a stone vessel. This is because stone vessels are in Egyptian polychrome tomb paintings depicted with particular wavy lines imitating the materiality of the stone. Also there is decoration depicted on the shoulder of the vessel consisting of circles, and if one compares the facsimile of the scene with the drawing with missing figures and vessels, it then becomes clear that the area from the shoulder to the rim of the bowl must have been of the same yellow color found on other vessels. This suggests that we are dealing with a metal vessel depicted in yellow and white, indicating gold and silver. Metal vessels of this form and decoration are found depicted in the workshop scene from the tomb of Mery (TT 95), where the upper parts of the vessels are also depicted in yellow, indicating gold.<sup>52</sup> Such vessels are known in Egypt as *dd.t* and are written with a determinative in their shape. They are found among the objects brought by the Aegean figures also in the tombs of Useramun, Menkheperreseneb, and Rekhmire.<sup>53</sup>

The vessels depicted in the right hand of the fourth and the left hand of the fifth figures are cups with one handle and a wide rim. The one carried by the fourth figure is depicted as being white with yellow elements consisting of bands under the mouth and above the base of the vessels. The band in the middle has three parts, the middle part being filled with a running S spiral in white and the surrounding filled with yellow. Similar band decoration under the mouth and on the bottom is attested in a Vapheio-type cup from grave 93, Enkomi, Cyprus, and from Knossos.<sup>54</sup> The decoration in the form of an S spiral on a Vapheio-type cup is known from shaft grave V (grave circle B) Mycenae.<sup>55</sup> The cup carried by the fifth figure also has two yellow bands depicted, one under the mouth and the other on the bottom of the vessel. The middle part of the vessel's body is decorated with two frontally depicted bull heads. The heads have blue horns, red faces, and yellow ears and chins. Between the horns of each bull a yellow rosette is depicted. Bearing in mind the Egyptian color convention, the vessels are made of silver with gold, copper, bronze, and precious stone (lapis-lazuli?) inlays. Vapheio-type cups with precious stones are not known in the Aegean Bronze Age. However, a cup with similar decoration in the shape of bull heads with rosettes between the horns is known from a private collection in London. It is a copper cup inlaid with gold, electrum, and silver, said to have been found in Crete.<sup>56</sup> The Vapheio-type cups from the Mycenaean shaft graves are dated into LH I, and the one from Mochlos to LM IB.<sup>57</sup>

The vessel carried by the fourth figure is a long, red pithoid vessel with short neck and shoulder, two loop handles depicted on the sides and one on the body of the vessel, under the shoulder, depicted frontally. Left and right of this frontally depicted handle there are two rosettes slightly more elaborately depicted than those on the Vapheio-type cup carried by the fifth figure. Under these handles and rosettes there are four figure-eight shields depicted. Another row of three handles, one at each side depicted in profile and one in the middle depicted frontally, is found toward the base of the vessel. Six horizontal lines parallel to each other are visible above the base of the vessel and under the lower row of handles. The closest analogies are found in “pithoid jars” with one row of handles on the shoulder and two rows of handles on the body, known from the North-east house in Knossos and dated to LM I.<sup>58</sup> The red color of the depicted vessels is understood as copper,<sup>59</sup> pottery,<sup>60</sup> or copper or bronze.<sup>61</sup> Stone vessels of similar shape are known from Cyprus; however, the lower row of handles is missing, the shape of upper body and neck is different, and they date to LC II–III.<sup>62</sup> Pithoi with two rows of handles are also known from MM IIIB Knossos,<sup>63</sup> but their shape is different from the shape of the vessel carried by the fourth Aegean figure in the tomb of Senenmut. This is especially the case regarding the neck and the shape of the rim, indicating a closed form. The discussions on the material represented by the red color are irrelevant for the question of the form analogies for the vessel.

The jug carried by the sixth figure in his right hand is a Type A jug according to the typology made by Shelley Wachsmann. The neck is of varying length, becoming wider at the rim, while the body tapers from the shoulder to the base. The one carried by the sixth figure is depicted in red color suggesting copper according to the Egyptian color convention.<sup>64</sup> According to Wachsmann, the shape of the jugs Type A could be a play on the Egyptian stone-vase shape termed *nhnm* and used for carrying oils, although four such jugs are depicted among the silver objects in the Treasure of Karnak.<sup>65</sup> The identification with *nhnm* vases is accepted by other authors, too.<sup>66</sup> A marble vessel of similar shape is known from Zakro.<sup>67</sup>

Providing analogies for the depictions of the objects brought by the Aegeans in the tomb of Senenmut is necessary for the proper identification of the objects in question. However, quite often the objects were used to interpret the figures who brought them as bearers of archaeological cultures such as Minoan or Mycenaean.<sup>68</sup> This is because the analogies for some of the vessels

depicted in the tomb of Senenmut are found in the Mycenaean shaft graves but are considered to be Cretan in origin. Sometimes the attributions are based on preconceived ideas of the authors. Thus, one cup from Vapheio was attributed to Minoans because it has “quiet scenes of bulls being lured and tethered” and the other to Mycenaeans because of “scenes of the violent capture of bulls.”<sup>69</sup> This interpretation is clearly originating in the view established at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, namely that mainlanders were bellicose and Cretans peaceful and religious. Such a view is related to essentialist definition of ethnicity. Ironically, fortified settlements are unusual in mainland, and weaponry in graves is rare before late MH period and the orientation to Crete, while weapons from the Mycenaean shaft graves are either products of Cretan workshops or derived from Cretan prototypes.<sup>70</sup>

The effort to distinguish Mycenaean from Minoan objects in the Mycenaean shaft tombs has had little success because we will never know for sure if the objects are Minoan imports or if they were made by Minoan artists on the mainland or by Mycenaean artists trained in Minoan skills.<sup>71</sup> This is because there is enough evidence suggesting that artists in the Late Bronze Age were moving not only in space but also between traditions on the same work they executed. Therefore, attributing a work to a certain tradition does not indicate the ethnicity of the producer.<sup>72</sup> So the traditional culture-historical view of archaeological culture and ethnicity is not appropriate for interpreting either these objects or their depictions in Egyptian tombs.<sup>73</sup>

The efforts to ethnically identify the Aegean emissaries in Theban 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty tombs as Minoans or Mycenaeans took the existence of these ethnic groups in the past as indisputable. This went parallel to the use of the Egyptian word for a land/country, *kftjw*, as an ethnonym, both by Egyptologists and Aegean Bronze Age archaeologists even until quite recently.<sup>74</sup> The word *kftjw* is written with a land determinative and is used as place of origin in the tomb of Rekhmire and not as a reference to an ethnic group.<sup>75</sup> The Aegeans in the Egyptian tombs are by some authors even identified as Mycenaean kings and referred to as “Keftiu.”<sup>76</sup> As already shown, this interpretation does not hold ground: firstly because of the problems of essentialist views of ethnicity and material culture and their transfer in interpreting Egyptian imagery;<sup>77</sup> secondly because the depicted figures are quite certainly emissaries and not kings, although they could be referred to as *wr* in accompanying texts.<sup>78</sup> One should also take into account that a journey from mainland Greece or Crete to Egypt was indeed risky.<sup>79</sup> Clearly, this is one of the important reasons

Tomb of Senenmut (TT 71)	Aegean and Egyptian parallels	Date range for specific forms with the date of the closest parallels					
		MM I MH II	MM II MH II	MM III MH III	LM I LH I	LM II LH II	LM III LH III A1
		MM I MH I	MM II MH II	MM III MH III	LM I LH I	LM II LH II	LM III A1 LH III
		MM I MH I	MM II MH II	MM III MH III	LM IB LH I	LM II LH II	LM III A1 LH III
		MM I MH I	MM II MH II	MM III MH III	LM IB LH I	LM II LH II	LM III A1 LH III
		MM I MH I	MM II MH II	MM III MH III	LM IB LH I	LM II LH II	LM III A1 LH III
		MM I MH I	MM II MH II	MM III MH III	LM IB LH I	LM II LH II	LM III A1 LH III

Figure 3: Objects brought by the Aegean emissaries in the tomb of Senenmut with parallels in the Aegean and date range (redrawn and composed by the author after Arthur Evans, *The Palace of Minos II: Part II, Town-Houses in Knossos of the New Era and Restored West Palace Section, with Its State Approach* [London: MacMillan, 1928], 23; Hall 1928, 199; Nina de Garis Davies 1936, pl. XIV; Hartmut Matthäus, *Die Bronzegefäße der kretisch-mykenischen Kultur* [München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1980]; Bernhard Friedrich Steinmann, *Die Waffengräber der ägäischen Bronzezeit. Waffenbeigaben, soziale Selbstdarstellung und Adelsethos in der minoisch-mykenischen Kultur* [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012].

the rulers sent emissaries instead of traveling on their own. Last but not least, there is no evidence for direct diplomatic contact between New Kingdom Egypt and the very early Mycenaean elite. There is little material evidence at Mycenae for close relations between Egypt and the Greek mainland, with some Egyptian objects (alabaster jar from Grave V in Mycenae) having Minoan interventions on them. According to the overview done by Eric H. Cline, by the time of LH/LM I-II Egyptian objects comprise the vast majority of *orientalia*, with 82 Egyptian objects and 25 from other regions in the Near East. Even 67 of Egyptian objects are found on Crete making 82% of the corpus and mostly in LM IB contexts.<sup>80</sup> The role of Crete as intermediary for the Egyptian objects found in mainland contexts has to be acknowledged.<sup>81</sup> Although it is certain that no major direct contact existed in this period, one should not neglect the emissaries from *tin3yw* (mainland Greece-Mycenae?) presenting a vessel of *kftjw* manufacture to Thutmose III as

attested in his Annals.<sup>82</sup> This can perhaps be related to the necessity of good diplomatic relations during the reign of Thutmose III, as this was the time of Egyptian control of Palestine and therefore the Levantine coast crucial for anticlockwise sea voyages.<sup>83</sup>

According to Ellen N. Davis, the Vapheio-type cup carried by the fourth figure has the short, curved lower handle strip of Mycenaean type, and the one carried by the fifth figure has an L-shaped Minoan form of attachment strip. Therefore she suggests that both Minoan and Mycenaean vessels are represented “perhaps as indication that the Minoans and Mycenaeans sent joint envoys to Egypt in the early fifteenth century.”<sup>84</sup> The problem with this interpretation is the attribution of ethnicity to the figures based on the preconceived culture-historical idea that objects are sorted out into archaeological cultures represent distinctive ethnic groups, e.g., Minoan culture:Minoans, Mycenaean culture:Mycenaeans.<sup>85</sup>



What immediately seizes one's attention when one moves from identifying analogies for single objects to classes of objects is that some of the analogies come from the same contexts in the Aegean. Namely, the closest analogies for the objects depicted brought by the Aegeans in the tomb of Senenmut come from shaft grave V (grave circle B) at Mycenae (sword, Vapheio type cup and an ewer), dating to LH I, and from chamber tomb 12 at Dendra (sword, Vapheio cup and an ewer), dating to LH II-LH IIIA. These three classes of objects are also found in shaft grave VI (grave circle B) at Mycenae, dating to LH I.<sup>86</sup> Although chronologically distant, these burials contain three out of six classes of objects depicted in the tomb of Senenmut. One out of the remaining three classes of depicted objects, the pithoid amphora, can be surely related to the Aegean (Crete). The remaining two, the bowl and the jug, have closer analogies in the Egyptian material. This presence of non-Aegean objects among the Aegean objects in Theban tomb procession scenes was recently quite uncritically understood as evidence of "circularity of gift exchange" where the non-Aegean objects are explained as being previously presented as a gift to the Aegean ruler.<sup>87</sup> Such a direct approach to Egyptian imagery has already been mentioned in the introduction, and it proves to be based on the erroneous assumptions that Egyptian images are to be interpreted as photographs. The occurrence of objects belonging originally to one scene is known as transference when they appear in a scene they originally do not belong to.<sup>88</sup> The question of reality behind transference is also not new.<sup>89</sup> However, it was also recently shown that transference is never a random phenomenon. It is rather based on peculiar decorum notions of what is to be transferred and where and what is to be hybridized with what, Egyptian cultural topography being its background at least when procession scene are concerned.<sup>90</sup> This is why the appearance of representations of non-Aegean objects in the registers with the Aegean figures in 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Egyptian tombs cannot be taken as evidence for "Egyptian incapability or indifference to distinguishing clearly between foreign artistic traditions."<sup>91</sup> Also, because of a decorum-ordered transference, the appearance of non-Aegean objects in the registers with Aegeans cannot be taken as evidence for circulation of gifts or intermediary role of the Aegean, which by itself does not exclude these phenomena from existence. Indeed, as we have seen, a vessel of *kftjw* manufacture could be gifted by emissaries of *tin3yw*.

#### DISCUSSION

It is clear that the majority of object classes of Aegean origin depicted in the tomb of Senenmut form an

assemblage also known in the Aegean contexts. The contexts in which the classes of the Aegean objects depicted in the tomb of Senenmut are found together are burials of the elite in mainland Greece (mostly Mycenae) which are known for their elaborate construction and wealth. It cannot be doubted that these individuals were the ruling elite and that they could be identified as princes or chiefs of these communities.<sup>92</sup> Such an assemblage is characteristic for Group B Warrior Graves according to Hartmut Matthäus, and they are found in Zafer Papoura, Sellopoulo and Phaistos on Crete, and in Dendra, Mycenae, Nichoria and Tragana in mainland Greece.<sup>93</sup> On the basis of the depositional patterns, e.g., the appearance of prestige items in highly ritualized fashion and elaborate graves associated with important regional centers such as Mycenae, it can be concluded that access to these objects was restricted and controlled.<sup>94</sup> The display of wealth in mainland Greece has little parallel elsewhere because of the fact that most of the Cretan tombs were disturbed, although the Aegina treasure suggests that comparable display is to be expected.<sup>95</sup> There are also little-known burials dated to LM I period that have the whole assemblage of weapons, vessels, cosmetic utensils and imported objects. Those from Poros (Graves 6 and Π 1967) and Myrto-Pyrgos are of comparable assemblage but not wealth.<sup>96</sup> One has to point out that even in the mainland there are no comparable burials in wealth and amount of imported goods to the ones from Mycenae.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, the existence of similar burials in Crete has to be assumed and not dismissed. One has to take into account that on Crete only structures destroyed by fire have given evidence for the storage of luxuries and the ones that were abandoned usually contain only some such objects. There are several explanations for the scarcity of objects made out of precious metals, including Mycenaean takeover of the trade routes, and exchange and transfer either because of restricted supplies or symbolic value.<sup>98</sup>

The elite at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age in the Aegean expressed its identity and status through drinking practices, ownership of luxury vessels for their consumption, and through ownership and display of weaponry.<sup>99</sup> This phenomenon is generally wide spread in Bronze Age Europe.<sup>100</sup> Identity and status could have also been expressed through the very ability to organize a feast, with the presence of feasting equipment in the tomb representing this ability, but also sponsorship and a reputation for hospitality.<sup>101</sup> Indeed, both drinking and serving vessels appear in different classes both in the Aegean elite burials and among the objects brought by the Aegeans in the tomb of Senenmut. The same is true for weaponry, as a sword is depicted carried by the first figure in the tomb of Senenmut.



The classes of Aegean objects from the tomb of Senenmut with parallels in the Aegean Bronze Age contexts are interpreted as evidence for gift exchange.<sup>102</sup> The existence of gift exchange in the Aegean Bronze Age has been argued by many different scholars.<sup>103</sup> Gifts inform us about the identity of both giver and receiver, as they mirror the givers but also symbolize how the receivers are perceived.<sup>104</sup> Bearing this in mind, it is clear that what the Egyptian king received was an already developed Aegean gift assemblage appropriate for a ruler. The existence of a firmly established gift assemblage in the Aegean suggests that gift-giving rules attested later in the Amarna letters for a wider Near Eastern and eastern Mediterranean region already existed 100 years earlier. These assemblages were probably soon followed by shared meaning horizons behind certain motifs and very similar ideas of kingship expressed through different iconographic styles.<sup>105</sup> Gradually hybrid iconography was developed and it could be consumed by different rulers.<sup>106</sup>

However, that the assemblage analogies are found in mainland Greece does not mean that the Aegean emissaries from the tomb of Senenmut also come from the mainland (cf. Kantor 1947). As it was pointed out earlier, the existence of similar princely graves on Crete has to be assumed for this period. When the Aegean figures in the Theban tombs are followed by an inscription they are described as coming from either “islands in the middle of great green (sea)” or “Keftiu (Crete) and/of the islands in the middle of great green.”<sup>107</sup> Being that the figures in the tomb of Senenmut are not labeled with an inscription suggesting their place of origin, we cannot know if they come from “islands in the middle of great green” or more specifically Crete. Being that they are dressed as the figures from the tomb of Useramun and that the term *kftjw* is associated with Aegean emissaries in Theban tombs only in the later reign of Thutmose III,<sup>108</sup> we can with great caution suggest that they also come from the “islands in the middle of great green.” This is, however, not helping us a lot in determining more closely where exactly they come from. Their dress is also not helping us in that matter.<sup>109</sup> Finally, we have to rely on the objects themselves. Although it was previously suggested and later confirmed that the analogies for the objects come from both Crete and the mainland Greece, one of those objects is solely related to Crete until now (pithoid amphora). The other objects also have a close Cretan connection, although some of the analogies are found outside of Crete and could have been produced by non-Cretans.<sup>110</sup>

The analogies for the Aegean objects depicted in the tomb of Senenmut have a date range from MM I–II to LM IIIA1 with most of them dated to LM IA or LM IB. The tomb of Senenmut dates to the reign of Hatshepsut, and the

transition from LM IA to LM IB must have taken place in the early 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty up to the reign of Hatshepsut.<sup>111</sup> Therefore, LM IB Period Aegean emissaries may have presented LM IA objects to the Egyptian court,<sup>112</sup> as we know that the finest LM IA objects are found outside Crete or in LM IB after-destruction contexts.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, most of the bronze vessels at least were produced in LM IA but ended up in destruction contexts of later periods, sometimes being repaired.<sup>114</sup> It is also possible that the procession scene with the Aegeans in the tomb of Senenmut represents an earlier event that was later depicted. However, Egyptian imports in LM IA contexts are scarce,<sup>115</sup> which can maybe be explained by gradual destructions that had started already and lasted until LM IB.<sup>116</sup> Similarly, according to Barry J. Kemp and Robert S. Merrillees there is no LM IA pottery in Egypt.<sup>117</sup> Also, procession scenes earlier than the one depicted in the tomb of Senenmut are indeed known, but there are no Aegeans depicted in them.<sup>118</sup> However, one should not exclude the existence of earlier tombs, and the fact remains that Senenmut also served under Thutmose II. Being that Egyptian objects are in LM IB compared to other regions of the Aegean predominantly found in Crete,<sup>119</sup> a closer connection with Crete than with mainland can be assumed. Here the LM IB date for the Minoan-style frescoes found in Tell el-Dab’a and their close relation to the palace of Knossos should also be mentioned.<sup>120</sup> However, although the palace must date to the Thutmoside period, it cannot be associated to a particular ruler yet. The possibility that the frescoes date to the reign of Thutmose I or II still falls within the range of LM IB and, as already mentioned Senenmut, also served under Thutmose II.

Therefore it can be argued that a Cretan polity, most certainly from Knossos, sent to an Egyptian king an assemblage of objects that is in mainland Greece at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age an expression of elite—even more precise: princely—identity. A great number of objects expressing princely identity in the mainland are either Cretan in origin or Cretan-related or inspired. Whether or not such an assemblage could be considered to be an expression of elite identity in Crete too is another question, being that the Cretans differentiated between their representation of identity at home and to the outside world.<sup>121</sup> This pattern is of great significance for the historical interpretation of the Aegeans in the tomb of Senenmut. However, that there is a high possibility that the Cretans sent the same assemblage to the mainland and Egypt does not at the same time indicate that they considered these different polities equally. This is particularly clear if one takes into account the uniqueness of the Tell el-Dab’a frescoes and the lack of similar contexts in mainland Greece in LM IB. The appearance of the frescoes in relation to the court connections between

Knossos and Egypt during the reign of Hatshepsut was explained by some as the plea for help for the reconstruction of the palaces and temples and rebuilding of ships after the eruption of Thera.<sup>122</sup> This cannot be accepted because the Thera eruption is placed in LM IA<sup>123</sup> and because if Hatshepsut indeed did all that Alexander MacGillivray claims she did, we would expect at least some of these deeds to be recorded. Not to mention that, as already stated above, the frescoes from Tell el-Dab'a cannot be attributed to a particular ruler according to the current state of knowledge.

Finally, we should also ask how was this gift assemblage received by the Egyptian court and by the Egyptian king? The Egyptian king surely had nothing against costly weapons and vessels, but did he really understand the message in the same way a prince from Mycenae would have? Did he keep the objects as an assemblage as they were sent to his court? The Tod treasury suggests that the objects were deposited grouped according to the material of which they were produced; thus lapis-lazuli seals are grouped together with lapis-lazuli raw material.<sup>124</sup> It also clearly shows us that the foreign objects, like the ones coming from the Aegean in this case, were redistributed and that some of them were given to the temples. The "Treasure of Karnak" depiction of Thutmose III groups different classes of objects in different registers. Different classes are depicted together on the basis of the material of which they were made. Among these are the Aegean objects depicted in Theban tombs, such as the lion-headed rhyta, known from the tombs of Useramun (TT 131), Menkheperreseneb (TT 86), and Rekhmire (TT 100), depicted in the second register of the "Treasure of Karnak," and the Vapheio-type cups depicted in second and sixth register.<sup>125</sup> Thus, it can be suggested that the gift assemblages were deconstructed after presentation at court in processions of foreigners. The objects that arrived in groups carrying specific meanings were re-grouped and gained new meanings without necessarily losing the previous ones. Clearly, as already suggested the meaning of foreign objects could be renegotiated, changed or transformed. The objects could be grouped and regrouped further depending on the will and intentions of the new owner, keeping or losing their foreignness.<sup>126</sup> This is most probably what happened to the Cretan gift assemblage. It was deconstructed and the meaning behind it was no longer the primary meaning for the single objects that had previously formed it.

### CONCLUSION

The historicity behind the representations of Aegeans and the objects they carry in the tomb of Senenmut can be

better understood through concentrating on the contexts of the analogies for single objects, but even more importantly on the contexts of the classes of depicted objects. This is because, as it has been shown, a peculiar pattern can be noticed when the assemblage of the depicted objects is compared to the objects deposited in the princely graves of the Late Bronze Age Aegean. The assemblage appears in these burials as part of the expression of elite identity and status. The close connection of these analogous objects to Crete and the identification of Aegeans in the tomb of Senenmut as emissaries of a Cretan polity, most probably Knossos, gives an interpretative background to the assemblage. The assemblage deposited in elite Aegean burials is also presented as a gift to an Egyptian king, suggesting that there was a clear and defined idea of what a gift for a foreign ruler should be. This, however, does not mean that the mainland princes and the Egyptian king were equally seen by the polity from Crete. The date of the Minoan-style frescoes from Tell el-Dab'a to LM IB fits well with the date for the analogies of the objects depicted in the tomb of Senenmut and the synchronization with early 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. The frescoes could be related to the visit of the Aegeans depicted in the tomb of Senenmut, suggesting that, next to the mentioned assemblage, the Aegean gift also included the painting of the palaces in Tell el-Dab'a. The interpretative and methodological problems behind the idea that the frescoes are evidence for a dynastic marriage and the presence of a Minoan princess in Tell el-Dab'a<sup>127</sup> do not change the fact that the visit was of great importance. Such frescoes are not found in contemporary mainland sites and are, indeed as with those from Knossos, unique in the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>128</sup> Why exactly did a polity from Crete send emissaries with gifts to the Egyptian court during the Thutmosides? One possible historical interpretation could certainly be the Egyptian northern expansion and their closer presence in the eastern Mediterranean. The Egyptian control of the Levantine coast must have affected the Cretan interests in this region, and the closer relations with Egypt during the Thutmoside period can maybe related to this, as the Levantine coast was crucial for anticlockwise sea voyages. The assemblage befitting princes in mainland Greece, strongly emphasizing among else their warrior-hood, also fits the ever-more-expansionist New Kingdom Egyptian rulers.

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