



REVIEW

EGIPTO Y EL EGEO A COMIENZOS DE LA XVIII DINASTIA: UNA VISION DE SUS RELACIONES, ANTECEDENTS E INFLUENCIA ICONOGRÁFICA

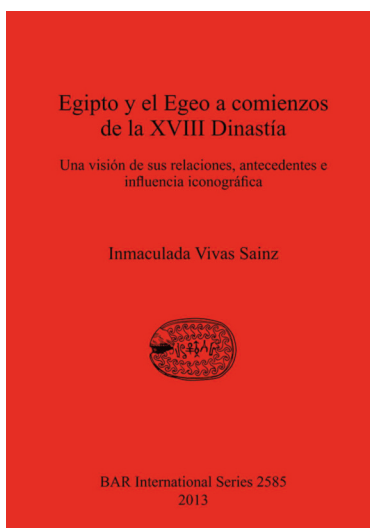
by Inmaculada Vivas Sainz
BAR Publishing, Oxford, 2013

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This book by Inmaculada Vivas Sainz is a new comprehensive study of all the available sources for the reconstruction of interconnections between Egypt and the Aegean during the 18th Dynasty. It comes in recognizable BAR softcovers and is illustrated appropriately for this type of a study (15 figures and 15 illustrations). The price of the book (£ 40) is reasonable and is slightly more appropriate for institutions.

The introductory chapter (I) sets out the goals of the study and gives a short history of the research and the geographical and chronological borders of the study. The principal aim is the interpretation of the Minoan frescoes found at Tell el-Dab'a in the context of other finds in Egypt and the Aegean. The work thus presents not a study and publication of previously unpublished archaeological or historiographical material, but rather a study of the long-discussed but rarely comprehensively studied problem of Aegean-Egyptian interconnections during the 18th Dynasty based on already-known sources.¹

In the chapter on conditions of navigation (II) Vivas Sainz summarizes evidence for the possible maritime roots from Aegean to Egypt and vice versa, including the southern Anatolian coast, Cyprus, and Syria-Palestine. The chapter on historical and



political context (III) starts with a summary of events during the Egyptian 17th Dynasty and continues with the 18th Dynasty. The chapter dealing with types of sources (IV) is very short; a more developed classification of the sources could have been more useful, especially when textual sources are concerned. However, the work compensates for this later.

The chapter dealing with sources and finds (V) is an excellent overview of current state of knowledge with the most up-to-date references. It starts with a very detailed analysis of the hoard from

the Tod temple in Egypt, and the author rightly dates the deposition to the time of Thutmose III, although the hoard itself contains older objects. Vivas Sainz stresses that the circulation of not only the objects but also of the raw materials and craftsmen makes it very hard to pinpoint the production sites. She nevertheless emphasizes that the hoard contains Aegean or Aegean-inspired objects and interprets them as king's donation to the temple (pp. 19–20). The chapter continues with an overview of imported Minoan pottery in Egypt starting with the 12th Dynasty. Evidence from Nubia and the Levant is also included, as are local imitations of Minoan pottery. After this comes discussion on the importation of Aegean textiles to



FIGURE 1: Bound enemy oval ring with the toponym “Keftiu” written inside, Abydos temple of Ramesses II; photograph, courtesy of Wikimedia user HoremWeb (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Name-Keftiu-at-Abydos-Ramses-Temple.jpg>; CC BY-SA 3.0; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en>).

Egypt, used as a basis for the discussion of the transfer and adaptation of motifs. Vivas Sainz also suggests that it is possible that a number of people from the Aegean were living, for example, at Kahun (p. 48). However, she bases this on the presence of Minoan pottery, which is not a particularly strong argument.

The fifth chapter continues the discussion of representations of Aegeans in 18th Dynasty Theban tombs. The author has been less careful here than in the rest of her work. Namely, she refers to these figures as “Keftiu,” although this term is a toponym (Fig. 1) and not an ethnonym and is for the first time directly associated with the Aegean figures in Theban tombs in the tomb of Rekhmire (TT 100).² Indeed, Vivas Sainz clearly writes that herself later

in the book (p. 56). This mistake is made by many scholars even today.³ In her table of tombs where the Aegean figures are depicted (Vivas Sainz’s Figura 7) she writes that the toponym “islands in the middle of Great Green” is written as the place of origin of the Aegean figures in the tomb of Senenmut (TT 71). This is an error because the accompanying inscription is not preserved. In fact this place of origin is for the first time related to the Aegean figures in the tomb of Useramun (TT 131), whose Aegean figures are indeed very close in appearance to those in the tomb of Senenmut.⁴ This could indicate that they come from the same place, but it has to remain an educated guess. The table also contains some tombs with Syrian figures described as coming from places interpreted as located in the Aegean (e.g., Keftiu-Crete as origin of Syrian figures in the tomb of Amenemhab, TT 85). Contextualizing the representations of the Aegeans in Theban tombs in 18th Dynasty scenes of processions of foreigners, Vivas Sainz makes an interesting comment that, although these scenes depict foreigners from different regions (Aegean, Punt, Syria and Nubia, as, for example, in the tomb of Rekhmire), it is nevertheless difficult to believe that annual “tribute” from these regions came at the same time (p. 52). Although an interesting remark, one has to bear in mind Amarna letter EA 1, in which Kadašman-Enlil complains that Amenhotep III placed the chariots Kadašman-Enlil sent as gift together with chariots sent as tribute from Amenhotep III’s vassals, which argues against her point.⁵ Namely, we know that gifts and tribute did not travel alone but had to be brought by emissaries of their countries of origin, so the EA 1 suggests the possibility that emissaries from different countries attended the ceremony in Egypt together. Whether or not they arrived there at the same time or had to wait for the ceremony is not clear, however, as there are sources indicating that emissaries could be delayed. Vivas Sainz suggests that the bearded figures that accompany the text stating their Aegean origin, such as the Prince of Keftiu in the tomb of Menkheperreseneb (TT 86), could indicate their higher status (p. 53). A similar argument was put forward by Angela Murock Hussein.⁶ However, being that the figures in question are Syrian and not hybrid, it is more appropriate to interpret them as transference, possibly because the Egyptian painters lacked a motif of an Aegean in proskynesis.⁷

Regarding the palimpsest in the tomb of



Rekhmire, where the original loincloth figures in earlier tombs (Senenmut and Useramun) was painted

over with kilts (first appearing in the tomb of Menkheperreseneb), Vivas Sainz follows Paul Rehak's date of this change into LMIIIA1. Rehak dated this change to LMIIIA1 because of the later date he accepted for the Procession Fresco from Knossos and the low Egyptian chronology and high radiocarbon-based Aegean chronology he utilized in this process.⁸ However, an earlier date was also proposed for this fresco, and this would fit better with the fact that kilts are already known in the tomb of Menkheperreseneb with a *terminus post quem* in the 33rd regnal year of Thutmose III. The rule of Thutmose III is well synchronized with LMII, which is when the kilts start predominate the dress of the elite in the Aegean.⁹ This chronological problem aside, Vivas Sainz makes an interesting comment that the change of dress could indicate the change of status of the emissaries or more court appropriate dress (p. 58). This was indeed the idea of Paul Rehak when he published his seminal work on this problem.¹⁰ Vivas Sainz also discusses the rarely mentioned evidence of Aegean figure from the tomb 5A P2 at Thebes, of which only a hand holding an Aegean vessel is now preserved (p. 59). When dealing with written sources, Vivas Sainz demonstrates in detail the main arguments for localizing certain Egyptian toponyms in the Aegean. The chapter then continues with detailed overview of Egyptian imports in the Aegean, and here a more critical discussion on the chronological synchronizations is notable.

The last chapter (VI) deals with the Minoan

FIGURE 2: Reconstruction of the Minoan fresco at Tell el-Dab'a, eastern Delta, Egypt; in the Archaeological Museum, Iraklion, Crete, Greece; courtesy of Martin Dürschnabel (Wikimedia user Bender235; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reconstructed_Minoan_Fresco_Avaris.jpg; CC BY-SA 2.5, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/deed.en>).

frescoes from Tell el-Dab'a (Fig. 2), and after providing the reader with context, iconography, research history, and interpreta-

tions, Vivas Sainz attempts to place them in the context of her comprehensive study. She carefully discusses previously suggested interpretations, pointing to all of their strengths and weaknesses, and concludes (chapter VII) that they are evidence of diplomatic relations but rightfully does not venture further before more evidence is available (pp. 196–197).

This book is highly recommended because it brings together different classes of archaeological and historical evidence for the contact between Egypt and the Aegean during the 18th Dynasty in one place. It is up to date with references, and its minor errors often made by other scholars too, are compensated for by the enormous amount of information one can find in one place. It is a useful volume for both Egyptologists and scholars of the Late Bronze Age Aegean, as it brings together two disciplines and two cultures into one comprehensive investigation. This was last attempted by Eric H. Cline, more than two decades ago,¹¹ and the contribution by Vivas Sainz is a most welcome and most useful summary and discussion based on the current state of research.

¹ For a seminal study of this problem see also Eric H. Cline, *Sailing the Wine-dark Sea: International Trade and the Late Bronze Age Aegean*, BAR International Series 591 (Oxford: Tempvs Reparatum, 1994).

- ² Uroš Matić, "'Minoans,' *Kftjw* and the 'Islands in the Middle of *W3d Wr'* beyond Ethnicity," *Ägypten und Levante* 26 (2014): 277–294.
- ³ For a summary see Matić 2014.
- ⁴ Matić 2014.
- ⁵ William L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 1–3
- ⁶ Angela Murock Hussein, "Chief of Keftiu," *Göttinger Miszellen* 214 (2007): 33–38.
- ⁷ Matić 2014, 284.
- ⁸ Paul Rehak, "Aegean Breechcloths, Kilts, and the Keftiu Paintings," *American Journal of Archaeology* 100.1 (1996): 35–51.
- ⁹ Uroš Matić and Filip Franković, "Out of Date, Out of Fashion: The Change of Dress of Aegean Figures in Egyptian 18th Dynasty Theban Tombs," *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici* NS (2017, in press).
- ¹⁰ Rehak 1996.
- ¹¹ Cline 1994.