



## Review

### AEGYPTIACA ON THE ISLAND OF CRETE IN THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL CONTEXT: A CRITICAL REVIEW

Jacqueline Phillips

Contributions to the Chronology of the Eastern Mediterranean XVIII

M. Bietak and H. Hunger, eds.

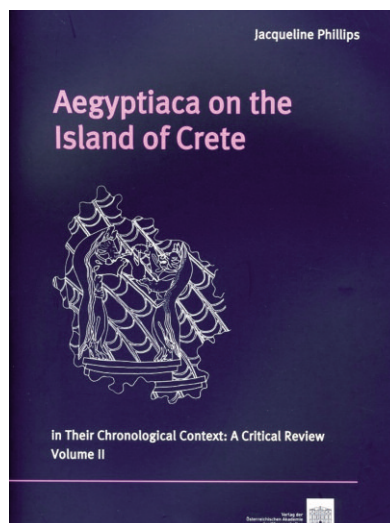
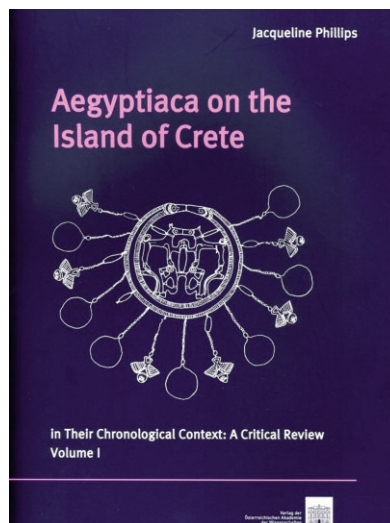
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**A**egyptiaca on the Island of Crete was published at the end of 2008—shortly before the inception of this journal. Although the work has since been reviewed elsewhere, *JAEI*'s editors regard it as of sufficient importance to merit a short review at this time.

The two volumes of *Aegyptiaca on the Island of Crete* represent "... 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." Also included are some local Cretan imitations and derivations of Egyptian materials. An updating of Jacqueline Phillips's University of Toronto Ph.D. dissertation, the work was planned as a special publication within the "Synchronization of Civilizations in the Eastern Mediterranean" Project of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. As editor Manfred Bietak notes in his preface, the nature of the material itself renders its use difficult in terms of transferring Egyptian chronology to Crete and to the larger Aegean world—yet the value of the work as a systematic study of Egypt's cultural impact on ancient Crete can hardly be overemphasized. This is especially true (as noted in the introduction) considering that, after imports from elsewhere in the Aegean, the numerical quantity of Egyptian objects found on Crete is greater than from any other contemporaneous ancient culture.



Volume I encompasses a survey of previous scholarship and detailed examination of chronological considerations regarding the material to be catalogued. Chapters 4–11 then cover individual categories of objects: stone vessels, faience and glass vessels, ceramics, scarabs and seals (including appendices on the Minoanization of scarabs and the reworking of Egyptian examples), beads, ostrich eggshells, and statuettes and other figurative objects. Chapters 12–19 then cover Egyptian and Egyptianizing iconographic images: the hippopotamus, ape, swan/goose/duck, cat, crocodile, *Gravidenflaschen* and parturient figures, and miscellaneous other material. The level of cataloging and analysis in all these sections is thorough, and each provides a valuable treatment of its subject. Chapter 12, "From Hippopotamus to 'Genius' Image," for example, treats the complex and often confusing corpus of extant images with clarity and arrives at carefully supported conclusions. While Phillips does not examine some possible connections between the Minoan "genius" and the related Egyptian hippopotamus deities (such as the carrying of a significant animal and the astral elements found in both sets<sup>1</sup>), she brings together and successfully analyzes a large amount of complex data, always with an eye toward chronological aspects that result in a better understanding of

diachronic developments. Throughout the discussions, catalog numbers are given that refer to the contextualized description of each object in Volume II. Of particular importance is the special attention given to the history of each class of artifact or representation in both Egypt and Crete, allowing the connections to be seen in proper context. The volume closes with full bibliographies and useful distribution maps that give visual provenance for the individual objects covered in each section.

Volume II systematically examines the contexts in which the Egyptian and Egyptianizing materials that are the subject of this study were discovered. The volume consists of detailed descriptions of the find sites, both the overall excavations and specific find-loci (where possible). Sites range from the largest palatial sites to very small excavational contexts, but all are covered with careful consideration of setting, excavation history, and finds. Individual artifacts, objects, and representations are cataloged and described in the context of their find sites. The various whole and partial objects are then discussed with full descriptions as well as information regarding *comparanda* and other parallels. Conclusions are given as to whether each object represents Egyptian, Egyptianizing, or Minoan material.

There are no photographic illustrations, but all objects are illustrated by means of consistently clear and well-produced line drawings, and the data are handled with care. Pottery is illustrated with standard sectional views wherever possible, and representations are given reconstruction extensions where they may confidently be made. In cases where Phillips disagrees with current restorations, both the present restoration and her own are given in different line styles. Objects are specifically listed that were not directly handled by the author or collated with their representations. Multiple views are given of amulets and certain other small finds, most of which are drawn at a 1:1 scale. Scarabs and scaraboid stamp seals are illustrated by means of dorsal and profile views together with an enlarged 3:2 view of the base to increase the clarity of base inscriptions or motifs. Seal impressions are depicted as found, and seal designs are depicted as-cut rather

than reversed to indicate their impressions. The second volume ends with a group of concordances linking the objects discussed to museum collections, publications, and sites.

One of the most valuable aspects of this work is the multifaceted approach taken to the data it brings together. Because individual artifacts and representational motifs are approached from spatial, temporal, synthetic, and analytic perspectives, the work provides multiple paths of entry for considering single or multiple classes of material. The work may be utilized to check data on specific subjects or as a source for the production of comparative data.

At €196, these volumes are not inexpensive, but the quality of production is extremely high, no typographical errors were noted, and text and illustrations are uniformly well presented. In any event, the value of the data compiled and analyzed in these volumes is considerable, and truly indispensable for scholars in the area of Egyptian-Minoan interaction as well as in mainstream Minoan studies. Although this is a scholarly work aimed primarily at researchers in these and related fields, it is clearly written and will provide a tremendous resource, scholarly model, and inspiration to advanced students. It should also be of great interest to historians, anthropologists, and others studying cultural interconnections between ancient Egypt and Crete, as well as more general Bronze Age interconnections in the Mediterranean.

The volumes are graciously dedicated to the memory of the author of their forerunner,<sup>2</sup> John Pendlebury, but Phillips has produced a work that adds a great deal to the earlier scholarship in this area.

—*JAIE Editorial Staff*

#### NOTES

1. See “The Indebtedness of Minoan Religion to Egyptian Solar Religion: Was Sir Arthur Evans Right?” by Nanno Marinatos, which appeared in Vol. 1:1 of this journal shortly after the publication of *Aegyptiaca on the Island of Crete*.
2. Pendlebury, John, *Aegyptiaca: A Catalogue of the Egyptian Objects in the Aegean Area* (Cambridge, 1930).