



LATE BRONZE AGE CORNELIAN AND RED JASPER SCARABS WITH CROSS DESIGNS. EGYPTIAN, LEVANTINE OR MINOAN?*

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ABSTRACT

This contribution reassesses the date and origin of a particular group of cornelian and red jasper scarabs, displaying line designs such as crosses and stars on their bases. The numbers that surfaced in the southern Levant and the Aegean have led scholars to attribute them to Ramesside Egyptian, Late Bronze Age IIB/III Palestinian, or even Middle Minoan II workshops. An assessment of the Egyptian finds, however, remained wanting. This article presents an overview of all provenanced artifacts and argues that the recorded quantities and, more importantly, their archaeological context and distribution pattern throughout Egypt, the Levant and the Aegean indicate an Egyptian origin and 18th Dynasty date for these scarabs with geometric designs.

The scarabs under discussion have three aspects in common: they are all made of cornelian (etymologically more accurate than the familiar designation ‘carnelian’)¹ or red jasper, they display X-shaped or, more frequently, star-shaped designs on their bases and they are mainly found in Late Bronze Age contexts throughout Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean. The non-Egyptian nature of their designs, the use of semiprecious stone and their wide distribution has prompted scholars to postulate a large variety of interpretations regarding their origin, meaning and dating.

Ancient sources of cornelian can be located in India, Iran, Turkey and Saudi-Arabia. It was also found in the Egyptian Eastern (northeast of Luxor in the regions of the Wadi Saga and the Wadi Abu Gerida) and the Western Deserts (Gebel el-Asr in Nubia).² Red jasper is another red colored microcrystalline quartz, but opaque compared to the translucent cornelian. It was found mainly in Iran, Saudi-Arabia and in the Eastern (and possibly also the Western) Egyptian Desert.³ The cornelian and red jasper amulets, beads and seal-amulets that surfaced in the Levant and Mesopotamia are therefore either imported from these regions or the result of local manufacture from imported raw material or semi-finished objects.

In most cases, it has been the archaeological context that invited scholars to postulate a date for this group of scarabs with cross designs. A 19th Dynasty origin has generally been accepted (*cf. infra*) but evidence from the northern Levant argues for a revision of this dating based on archaeological, iconographical and typological considerations.

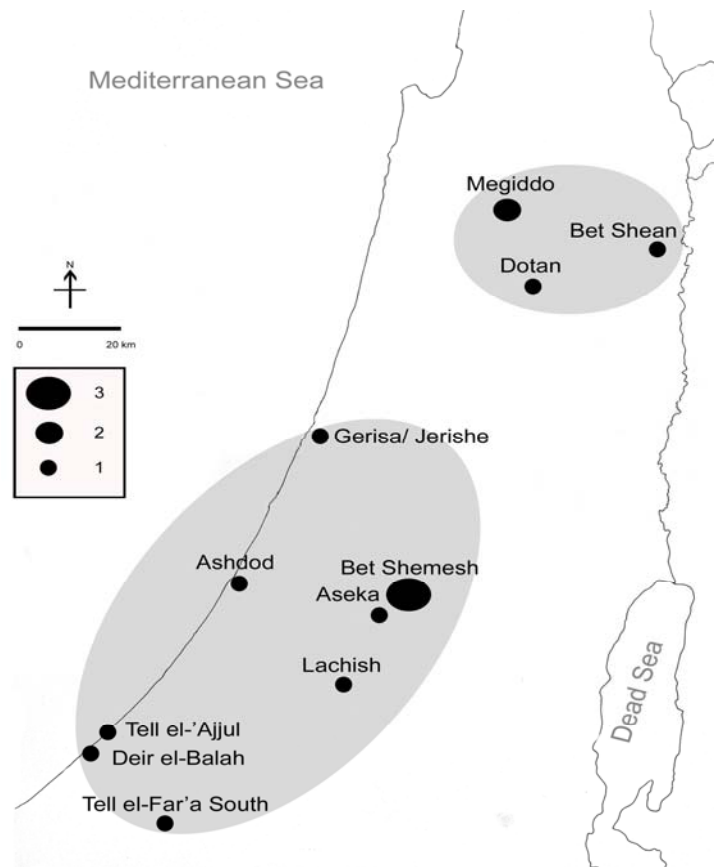


Figure 1: Distribution map of cornelian scarabs with cross designs in the southern Levant.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPROACH

A considerable number of cornelian scarabs surfaced in the southern Levant, approximately in two regions (Figure 1 and Figure 2 nos. 1-2, 4-10, 12-16)⁴: a concentration of 10 finds is discernable in the south, in the southern and central coastal plain (Deir el-Balah, Tell el-‘Ajjul, Tell el-Far‘a South, Lachish, Aseka, Bet Shemesh, Ashdod, Jerishe/Gerisa) and a smaller group of 4 scarabs is located in the upper Samarian highlands and the Jezreel Valley (Dotan, Megiddo and Bet Shean).⁵ Nearly all seal-amulets

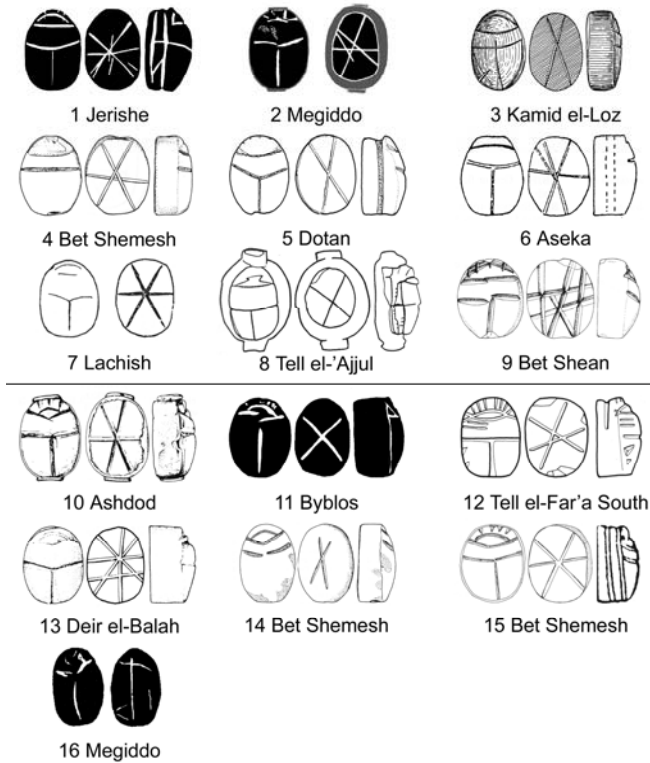


Figure 2: Cornelian scarabs with cross designs from the Levant.

No.1: Drawings by the author after Ory 1944, pl. XIII no. 8; No. 2: Drawings by the author after Rowe 1936, no. 379; No. 3: Kühne and Salje 1996, abb. 30; No. 4: Keel 2010a, 309 no. 210; No. 5: *Idem*, 505 no. 32; No. 6: Keel 1997, 737 no. 2; No. 7: Tufnell, Inge and Harding 1940, pl. XXXIIA no. 24; No. 8: Keel 1997, 515 no. 1208; No. 9: Keel 2010a, 199 no. 229; No. 10: Keel 1997, 683 no. 59; No. 11: National Museum of Beirut, inv. no. 21385, drawings by the author (© Ministry of Culture/Directorate General of Antiquities, Lebanon); No. 12: Keel 2010b, 405 no. 900; No. 13: Keel 2010a, 411 no. 20; No. 14: *Idem*, 309 no. 209; No. 15: *Idem*, 279 no. 143; No. 16: Drawings by the author after Rowe 1936, no. 798.

surfaced in Late Bronze Age IIB/III contexts, in tombs, structures and levels dated to the 13th century or later.⁶ Based on

these findings and on the availability of the material, Othmar Keel and Baruch Brandl assigned an Egyptian origin to the group, more precisely to the 19th Dynasty.⁷ On the other hand, a non-Egyptian origin for the southern Levantine finds was recently proposed by Nir Lalkin. He notices the concentration in the Shephelah, around Bet Shemesh, and postulates a 13th century workshop in this region.⁸

The presence of two cornelian scarabs - one of which bears a cross-shaped design on its base (Figure 2 no. 3) - in an older context further north, in Lebanon, does not agree with the 13th century date proposed by the authors mentioned above. They were discovered in a funerary context in Kamid el-Loz (ancient Kumidi), an important Late Bronze Age centre in the southern Biq'a Valley and located on the route from Palestine to Central Syria. The so-called Treasury (*‘das Schatzhaus’*) is named after the many precious and exceptional finds it contained but originally functioned as a funerary structure for the local royal family. Stratigraphically, it can be associated with Phase P4 of the palace (P4d-P4a, ca. 1480-1350). It is possible that the tomb was already constructed at the end of the previous phase, P5 (ca. 1550-1480)

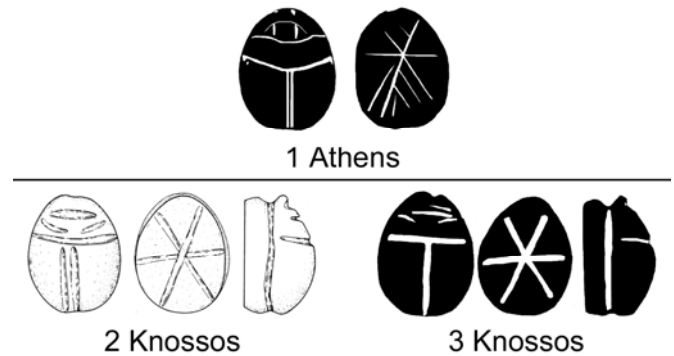


Figure 3: Cornelian scarabs with cross designs from the Aegean.

No. 1: Drawings by the author after Blackmann 1999: fig. 5; No. 2: Popham 1980, fig. 5; No. 3: Drawings by the author after Phillips 2004, fig. 8 top.

but it is certain that it was no longer in use by the late 14th century.⁹ The Treasury’s date is based on the burial gifts, such as ivory objects, bronze weapons, jewelry in gold, local and imported (Cypriot and Minoan) pottery and stone vessels.¹⁰ It should be noted that the burial complex was subject to disturbances caused by renovation campaigns during building phases P4c and P4a and by clandestine excavations in the late 1970s.¹¹ However, the cornelian scarab with cross design is registered as coming from a *‘primäre Lage’*, a floor level of building phase P4d in room S of the Treasury¹² and for that reason appears securely dated to the mid-15th century. It therefore seems that, unless the context was incorrectly recorded as a primary context by the excavator, the

scarab from Kamid el-Loz is older than the ones from the southern Levant and consequently represents the oldest attestation of this type in the entire Levant. If manufactured locally, a northern Levantine origin would therefore seem more likely than the southern workshop proposed by Nir Lalkin, even if larger quantities surfaced in Israel, where the pace of excavations is considerably higher. Another cornelian scarab with cross design was discovered in Byblos, but unfortunately represents a surface find (Figure 2 no. 11)¹³ and consequently can not confirm or refine the date indicated by the scarab from Kamid el-Loz.

An even higher date is proposed for the two scarabs recovered in a Late Minoan IIIA1 tomb (late 15th - early 14th century) on the Gypsadhes hill at Knossos. They both display star-shaped designs (Figure 3 nos. 2-3). Jacqueline Phillips argues for a Middle Minoan II date (18th century) and considers them as “*indigenous antiques*”, i.e. local, Minoan scarabs and heirlooms in their archaeological context. According to her, a Minoan origin is indicated by the fact that “*There are few Egyptian examples (...) they have an entirely different profile and are not as crudely made*”.¹⁴ The tapering, somewhat pointed profile is indeed uncommon for cornelian scarabs with line designs but is not exclusive for the Cretan finds: it can also be observed in the profiles of the scarabs from Jerishe, Deir el-Balah and Tell el-Far’a South (Figure 2 nos. 1, 12, 13). The crude style of engraving, the other aspect that would suggest a local Minoan origin, is also discernable in the Levantine finds, except for the one from Jerishe which is neatly cut. The Middle Minoan II date for these two scarabs from Knossos therefore seems to be based solely on the fact that the design is not attested in Late Minoan Crete and cornelian objects occur on the island not earlier than Middle Minoan II.¹⁵ Admittedly, there is a local production of scarabs during the Middle Minoan I period (20th-19th century) but these display different features and are made exclusively of steatite.¹⁶

The only other Aegean find is a cornelian scarab from a Late Helladic tomb in the Athenian agora (Figure 3 no. 1).¹⁷ It is carefully executed and the rendering of the v-shaped notches on the shoulders, representing the humeral callosities (i.e. the ‘shoulders’ of the beetle), is a feature not attested on scarabs before the very end of the Second Intermediate Period and becomes one of the characteristic elements of New Kingdom scarabs.¹⁸ Consequently, from a typological point of view, this scarab is contemporaneous with its Late Bronze Age context and does not represent a Middle Minoan heirloom, as suggested by Phillips.

It thus seems that the three Aegean cornelian scarabs were found in early 14th century contexts and David Blackman rightly notes: “*As the LBA in the agora has produced limited imports, it will be of interest to determine if this scarab is in fact Egyptian or a local imitation*” (Blackman 1999, 5). The three Aegean scarabs are much more likely to be contemporaneous with their Late

Bronze Age context than to represent heirlooms predating their Levantine counterparts by more than three centuries. Moreover, the fact that only two examples can be cited for Crete and the nearly complete absence of these cornelian scarabs in other Aegean contexts compared to the numerous finds from the Levant, strongly argue against a Minoan origin.

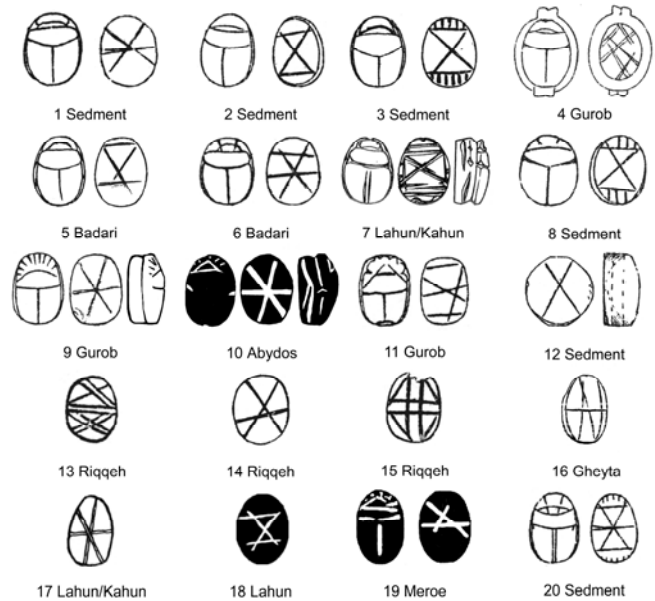


Figure 4: Cornelian and red jasper scarabs with cross designs from Egypt.

No. 1: Petrie and Brunton 1924, pl. LVIII no. 21; No. 2: *Idem* no. 20; No. 3: *Idem* no. 36; No. 4: Brunton and Engelbach 1927, pl. XXII no. 20; No. 5: Brunton 1930, pl. XXXIV no. 75; No. 6: *Idem* no. 22; No. 7: Tufnell, Martin and Ward 1984, fig. 23 no. 23; No. 8: Petrie and Brunton 1924, pl. LVIII no. 28; No. 9: Brunton and Engelbach 1927, pl. XXIX no. 9; No. 10: Royal Museums of Art and History Brussels, inv. no. E.4409B, drawings by the author (© Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels); No. 11: Brunton and Engelbach 1927, pl. XLI no. 96; No. 12: Petrie and Brunton 1924, pl. LVIII no. 40; No. 13: Engelbach 1915, pl. XVIII no. 75; No. 14: *Idem* no. 76; No. 15: *Idem* no. 77; No. 16: Petrie 1906, pl. XXXVII no. 64; No. 17: Tufnell, Martin and Ward 1984, fig. 24 no. 28; No. 18: Drawings by the author after Petrie, Brunton and Murray 1923, pl. L; No. 19: Drawings by the author after Dunham 1963, fig. 37 no. 4; No. 20: Petrie and Brunton 1924, pl. LVIII no. 19.

The scarab from Kamid el-Loz and the three examples from the Aegean world are not the only ones from contexts predating those of the southern Levant. At least eighteen cornelian scarabs with crossing line designs were discovered in Egyptian sites and most of them come from contexts dated to the 18th Dynasty or slightly later (Figure 4).¹⁹

In Egypt, uninscribed cornelian scarabs are already attested in the 12th Dynasty, although a few isolated examples date back to the First Intermediate Period.²⁰ It is, however, not before the New Kingdom that cornelian really becomes appreciated for the production of scarab-shaped seals. They bear royal names²¹ or display figurative designs such as representations of anthropomorphic deities, and are produced all through the New Kingdom.²² Analogous with this tradition of name and figurative design scarabs, red stone scarabs with cross designs also appear during the New Kingdom. It is interesting to note that, contrary to the Levant, red jasper is sometimes used for their production.²³

A thorough examination of excavation reports demonstrates that Egyptian sites yielded more scarabs with cross designs than anticipated: at least twenty were found during controlled excavations. About half of them come from burials dated to the 18th Dynasty; only five come from post-Ramesside contexts. A closer look into the archaeological contexts is needed to identify the oldest examples of these scarabs with cross designs and, subsequently, to fix a date for their first appearance in Egypt. Two cornelian scarabs (Figure 4 nos. 7 and 17) with cross designs surfaced in the Tomb of Maket in Lahun/Kahun. It was dated to the Ramesside Period by William Matthew Flinders Petrie, based on the popularity of certain burial gifts during the 19th and 20th Dynasties.²⁴ Olga Tufnell and William Ward dated the seal-amulets to the early part of the 18th Dynasty based on their typology. The presence of scarabs naming Thutmose III and the complete absence of scarabs naming his successors or scarabs displaying typical Ramesside designs, point towards a mid 18th Dynasty date for the burial, which appears to have been closed during the reign of Thutmose III.²⁵ Mid 18th Dynasty dates were also assigned to the tombs in Sedment that yielded cornelian and red jasper scarabs with cross designs (Figure 4 nos. 1-3, 12, 20): Tomb 1723 was dated “*Tebutmes III*” by the excavators, Tomb 1810 between “*Amenhetep II and Tebutmes IV*” and Tomb 2200 was assigned an even higher date, “*early XVIIIth Dynasty*”.²⁶ An early 18th Dynasty date (“*Amenhetep I*”) was also attributed to Tomb Group 27 at Gurob/Kom Medinet Ghurab, containing one red jasper scarab with cross design (Figure 4 no. 4).²⁷ Based on its ceramic assemblage, however, the tomb is more likely to date from the mid 18th Dynasty.²⁸ Tomb 2200 in Sedment therefore brings the date for this group of scarabs back to the early, rather than to the mid 18th Dynasty, although this high date seems to be based solely on the presence of a coffin, painted in “*a style reminiscent of the Middle Kingdom*”.²⁹ This could not be verified due to the lack of reproductions in the excavation report and the evidence from Sedment Tomb 2200 is therefore insufficient to support a date higher than the one proposed by the other Egyptian finds.

The geographical distribution of cornelian and red jasper scarabs with cross designs shows that they are largely found in Middle Egypt (Figure 5). Moreover, the scarabs from 18th Dynasty contexts, discussed above, concentrate in the Fayum

region (Gurob, Sedment and Lahun). Red stone scarabs with cross designs from burials that are not dated exclusively to the 18th Dynasty but more generally, to the 18th-19th Dynasties, are also located in Middle Egypt: Gurob, Riqqeh and Badari. The contexts of the finds in the Nile Delta (Gheyta/Tell Yehud), in Upper Egypt (Abydos) and Nubia (Meroe) are dated to the Late Period or later.



Figure 5: Distribution map of cornelian and red jasper scarabs with cross designs in Egypt and Nubia.

It can be concluded that the archaeological evidence from Egypt, the Levant and the Aegean indicates that red stone scarabs with cross designs first appear in Egypt, in Lebanon (Kamid el-Loz) and Crete (Knossos), perhaps also on the Greek mainland (Athens). Their production in red jasper seems to be limited to Egypt. The contexts point towards a production period between the reigns of Thutmose III and Thutmose IV, possibly until the reign of Amenhotep III, i.e. the mid 18th Dynasty (ca. 1479-1389/1349).

ORIGIN OF THE CROSS-DESIGN AND MEANING

All finds from Egypt were discovered in burials, whether dated to the New Kingdom or later. This is also the case for the

two scarabs from Crete, the one scarab from Athens and for one third of the cornelian scarabs from the Levant. This particularity may attest to the transfer, at least in these cases, of the original, Egyptian function and meaning.

Material and color played a significant role in ancient Egypt, where the symbolic value ascribed to the color red was that of power and strength. Even though it was associated with anger and rage, even with violence, these aspects were used in a positive way, with the aim to avert threats and evils and protect the owner of the object.³⁰ The use of cornelian and red jasper in funerary contexts (i.e. mainly for amulets, seal-amulets and beads) can therefore be interpreted as a reinforcement of the apotropaic function of the object to secure the well-being of its owner.³¹

Whereas the distribution pattern and first appearance of these cornelian and red jasper scarabs clearly point towards Egypt for their production, it is principally the non-Egyptian nature of the star and cross designs that would argue against an Egyptian origin.

New Kingdom scarabs display names of kings, the name or representations of the god Amun Ra, the eye of Horus *wꜥ3t*, the *tilapia nilotica* fish, lotus flowers, uraei in various compositions, the scorpion, the lion, the sphinx and representations of the king.³² The simple, irregular and non-standardized cross designs on the cornelian scarabs do not fit within this well-defined and mostly figurative iconographic repertoire of the period.

Cross designs are universal motifs, particularly as a simple marking sign; they are not exclusive ‘Minoan’, ‘Levantine’ or ‘Mesopotamian’.³³ Othmar Keel proposes a connection to a Levantine goddess.³⁴ In Egypt, cross and star-shaped designs are attested on the earliest types of seal-amulets³⁵ and they are not unknown during the 18th Dynasty, where they appear on scarabs in other materials and on other types of seal-amulets: a steatite scarab from a 18th Dynasty context at Lahun, a blue faience cowroid from a late 18th-early 19th Dynasty context in Gebel el-Zeit³⁶ and two faience (?) scarabs dated to the early to mid 18th Dynasty by Percy E. Newberry³⁷ are some of the examples attesting to their regained popularity during the early New Kingdom.

From this point of view, the simple crossed line designs could even be linked to the so-called “international artistic style” of the Late Bronze Age, attesting to the recurrent use of similar decorative imagery by different cultures in the eastern Mediterranean.³⁸ Moreover, attributing the non-Egyptian nature of the design to the presence of foreign seal cutters in Egypt is not unfeasible. The foreign influence on Egyptian art during the New Kingdom has been discussed extensively in the literature³⁹ and the presence of Levantines in Middle Egypt is apparent in the archaeological and historical records.⁴⁰ Furthermore, both the motif and the choice of material do not exclude that the production of these red stone scarabs could be related to a foreign deity or an Egyptian deity associated with distant lands,⁴¹ but ascertaining their true meaning remains hypothetical.

TYPOLOGICAL FEATURES

Typological sequences were established for scarabs from the preceding periods (Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period), allowing to distinguish Egyptian from Canaanite scarabs.⁴² A typological approach of the red stone scarabs discussed here could therefore offer additional insights into the date and origin of this particular group. Unfortunately, not all features are known and only preliminary remarks can be made based on the available information.

Nearly all the cornelian and red jasper scarabs identified during this research display lined backs. A scarab from Bet Shemesh (Figure 2 no. 14) and one from Abydos (Figure 4 no. 10) display plain backs, and the features of the backs are unknown for 6 scarabs (or 15 % of the material).

Another dominant feature is the so-called lunate or semi-circular head, in some cases taking a more triangular shape. Two types can be distinguished: certain scarabs display a simple lunate or triangular head, whether or not with the eyes marked on the sides, with a straight base line; other scarabs have a ‘depressed’ or ‘sagging’ head, cutting into the pronotum. The scarabs from the Levant are arranged according to their head type on Figure 2 and Figure 3: the heads with straight base line at the top and the heads with cutting base line at the bottom. Nevertheless, the two head types do not seem to suggest a chronological particularity as they are both attested on the oldest finds, that is to say on scarabs from context contemporary with the mid 18th Dynasty (compare, for instance: Figure 2 no. 3, Figure 3 nos. 2-3, Figure 4 nos. 1-4, 7, 20).⁴³ Neither are they an indication for the geographical origin of the scarabs, since they seem to be attested both in Egypt and beyond. It is, however, interesting to note that the Egyptian finds, provided that their features are known, display almost exclusively heads with straight base lines.⁴⁴

A large variety of side types can be observed: the legs are not represented (Figure 2 nos. 3-6, 9, 11, 13-14, Figure 4 no. 9), are rendered by a simple horizontal band (Figure 2 no. 15), are grooved (Figure 2 no. 1) or carved-out (Figure 4 nos. 7, 10). The fact that the features of the sides are unknown for half of the registered scarabs does not facilitate defining their typological properties. Unfortunately, only two scarabs from Egypt have been published with a representation of their profiles - which are not pointed - so the features of the sides are unknown for almost all Egyptian finds and can not help to confirm the pointed profile as a Minoan trait, as proposed by Jacqueline Phillips (*cf. supra*).

EGYPTIAN-LEVANTINE-AEGEAN RELATIONS

The distribution of cornelian scarabs with cross designs from Egypt, to the Levant and the Aegean, must be put against the background of international commercial and political relations.

The geographical proximity to Egypt and the Egyptian military and administrative presence in the Levant explain the

quantity of Levantine finds. To maintain the Egyptian empire in the Levant, particularly in Canaan, Thutmose III stationed garrisons on strategic points along the coastal plains. His successors strengthened the Egyptian presence by organizing the Levantine territory into administrative districts (Canaan, Upi and Amurru) and by securing the loyalty of local vassals.⁴⁵

The geographical distribution of cornelian scarabs as visualized in Figure 1 corresponds to the Egyptian presence in Canaan during the 13th century (the period to which the archaeological contexts of the cornelian scarabs are dated): during the Ramesside Period, bases were located at Tell el-Far^a South, Deir el-Balah, Tell el-^cAjjul, Gaza, Tell Sera^c, Tell el-Hesi, Ashdod, Tell Mor, Gezer, Jaffa, Aphek and Bet Shean.⁴⁶ The question remains why these cornelian scarabs, apparently representing an Egyptian production of the preceding period, were only deposited in their contexts during the early Ramesside Period. The inherent value of semiprecious stone could explain why they remained in circulation as precious heirlooms, but it is surprising that not a single object was found in a context contemporary with the 18th Dynasty. An alternative explanation would be that the southern Levantine finds are the result of a 13th century local production, as proposed by Nir Lalkin (*cf. supra*), but there are no typological or stylistic differences between these finds and their counterparts from older contexts in Egypt or the Aegean.⁴⁷

In regard to their presence further north, the Egyptian empire also encompassed Lebanon and during the mid and late 18th Dynasty, Egyptian bases were indeed established in Yarimuta, Ullaza, Byblos and Sumur/Tell Kazel.⁴⁸ The administrative centre for Upi, the second Egyptian district in the Levant, was Kumidi/Kamid el-Loz. Written sources attest to the presence of Egyptian officials in Kumidi, at least during the late 18th Dynasty.⁴⁹ Although Kumidi found itself under Egyptian influence from Thutmose III onwards, there is no clear archaeological evidence for an Egyptian presence in the city during the mid 18th Dynasty, the period to which the Palace P4 and its 'Treasury' are dated. Those buried here are either members of the local ruling family or Egyptian representatives. If not brought along as personal belongings by Egyptians, the *aegyptiaca* from the 'Treasury' are interpreted as diplomatic gifts sent to the ruling elite.⁵⁰ Even if the cornelian scarabs can hardly be considered prestigious items, the fact that they are 'exotic' and rare made them valuable.⁵¹ The historical background suggests that, during the mid 18th Dynasty, the local rulers of Kumidi were Egyptian vassals⁵² and goods from Egypt not only reinforced their allegiance to the pharaoh but also confirmed their social status.⁵⁴

Cornelian scarabs with cross designs in the Aegean – though attested in very small numbers – bear witness to the extensive trade network in the Late Bronze Age eastern Mediterranean. They were recovered from burials contemporary with the mid to late 18th Dynasty.⁵⁴ Egyptian-Aegean relations appear to have been close during the Late Helladic IIIA1/Late Minoan IIIA1

period, when Mycenae emerged as the dominant power in the Aegean.⁵⁵ The archaeological record demonstrates that Egyptian-Aegean relations intensified under Amenhotep III⁵⁶ and it is therefore probable that these cornelian scarabs found their way to Knossos and Athens during his reign.

The scarabs could have arrived in Crete and on mainland Greece together with Egyptian royal gifts and it has even been suggested that such objects were brought along by Egyptian diplomatic delegations.⁵⁷ Although items in semiprecious stone were valued, it is doubtful that these scarabs with their simple designs should be considered royal gifts.⁵⁸ The hypothesis has also been put forward that some *aegyptiaca* represent commodities: Egyptian gold, ivory or other valuables could have been exchanged for metals, more precisely silver and lead from Attica.⁵⁹ It is, however, more likely that the cornelian scarabs belong to the group of low-value manufactured items (*bric-à-brac*) that accompanied trade goods and whose exotic nature appealed to the local elites.⁶⁰ From this point of view, instead of resulting from direct Egyptian-Aegean relations, they may have arrived through a Levantine intermediary.⁶¹

CONCLUSION

The practice of secondary engraving of imported objects (i.e. reworking uninscribed or semi-finished scarabs or carving objects from imported raw material)⁶² could offer an alternative explanation for the finds in the Levant and in Crete but their archaeological contexts and distribution patterns indicate that this is very unlikely. The first appearance of cornelian scarabs with crossing line designs in Egyptian contexts, the quantities recorded in Egypt compared to those found abroad, but also the availability of cornelian in ancient Egypt and its use for the production of design and name scarabs throughout the New Kingdom argue for an Egyptian origin and a mid 18th Dynasty date for this particular group. Rather than interpreting them as non-Egyptian (Levantine or Minoan) imitations of an Egyptian prototype, these scarabs seem to represent genuine Egyptian products. A Middle Egyptian origin, more particularly in the Fayum region, can be postulated based on the geographical distribution pattern of the oldest examples. Whether they bear witness to an 'international style' or to a production by seal cutters with Levantine roots remains a matter of speculation. In any case, their widespread distribution, from Nubia to Greece, reflects Egypt's commercial relations with the neighboring regions and the extensive network of trade routes in the Late Bronze Age eastern Mediterranean, whether over sea or land.⁶³

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NOTES

- This article stems from doctoral research conducted by the author on the distribution of Egyptian scarabs in the northern Levant (Boschloos, V. 2011-2012. *Study in the relations between Egypt and the Near East: the geo-chronological distribution of Egyptian scarab-shaped seals in the northern Levant (Syria and Lebanon) from the late 3rd millennium to the late Iron Age*, unpublished PhD dissertation in Dutch, Vrije Universiteit Brussel). For a concise description of its aims, methods and results, see: Boschloos, V. (forthcoming), "Egyptian and egyptianising scarab-shaped seals in Syria and Lebanon", *Bibliotheca Orientalis* LXIX n° 3-4 (may-august 2012). I also wish to express my gratitude to the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels and the Lebanese Directorate General of Antiquities for their permission to publish here, for the first time, the scarabs from Abydos (Figure 4 no. 10) and Byblos (Figure 2 no. 11).
- ¹ Moorey 1994, 96 ("from the Latin *cornum*: *cornel-berry*, not *carnis: flesh*").
 - ² Aston, Harrell and Shaw 2000, 27; Bloxam 2010, 3; Haussperger 1991, 276; Inizan 1999, 130-135, fig.1; Moorey 1994, 97-98; Yule 1981, 193.
 - ³ Aston, Harrell and Shaw 2000, 29; Moorey 1994, 98-99.
 - ⁴ No scale was used in the figures due to the lack of dimensions for a number of scarabs. Recorded lengths range between 11 and 25 mm.
 - ⁵ Keel 1997, 514-515 no. 1208 (Tell el-^cAjjul, context unknown), 682-683 no. 59 (Ashdod, stratum XIIIa/XIV, ca. 1200-1000), 736-737 no. 2 (Aseka, hoard ca. 1300-1150); Keel 2010a, 198-199 no. 229 (Bet Shean, stratum S-4, ca. 1200-1150), 278-279 no. 143 (Bet Shemesh, stratum IVb, ca. 1300-1250/1150), 308-309 nos. 209-210 (Bet Shemesh, stratum IVb, ca. 1300-1250/1150), 410-411 no. 20 (Deir el-Balah, Late Bronze Age tomb), 504-505 no. 32 (Dotan, sifting of level 3-4, ca. 1400-1200); Keel 2010b, 404-405 no. 900 (Tell el-Far^a South, tomb 960, ca. 1300-1250/1150); Ory 1944, pl. XIII no. 8 (Jerishe, Late Bronze Age II tomb); Rowe 1936, no. 379 (Megiddo, Late Bronze Age II tomb 989C.1), no. 798 (Megiddo, tomb 877B.1); Tufnell, Inge and Harding 1940, pl. XXXIIA no. 24 (Lachish, structure D.III, ca. 1400-1200). To these scarabs can be added three seal-amulets in cornelian: a cowroid from a 13th century level in Aphek (Keel 1997, 90-91 no. 34), a rectangular plaque from Anafa (Keel 1997, 642-643 no. 8) and a signet ring from a Late Bronze Age tomb at Deir el-Balah (Keel 2010a, 410-411 no. 22).
 - ⁶ The contexts of the two scarabs from Dotan and Lachish have a more general date, ca. 1400-1200.
 - ⁷ Brandl 2009, 644; Keel 1995, §375.
 - ⁸ Lalkin 2008, chapter 8.3, pl. 96. He does not exclude the possibility that they found a new mine or a new source to import it from (Lalkin by correspondence). I wish to thank Nir Lalkin for sharing his insights with me.
 - ⁹ Adler 1994; Hachmann 1996.
 - ¹⁰ The finds are discussed in Adler 1994. Silvia Penner studied the local pottery (Penner 2006) and Christine Lilyquist dated the objects from the 'Treasury' to the period preceding the reign of Amenhotep III (i.e. early to mid 18th Dynasty, ca. 1550-1390) based on *comparanda* from Egypt and the Levant (Lilyquist in Adler 1994, 207-220). The Cypriot *Base Ring I-II* and *White Slip II* imports (Penner 2006, 182-183) and a Late Minoan IB jug (Lilyquist in Adler 1994, 208) agree with this date. Egyptian and Mycenaean pottery were not present.
 - ¹¹ Penner 2006, 153, 313, 325, 374, 402.
 - ¹² Kühne and Salje 1996, 151 no. 96.
 - ¹³ Dunand 1950-1958, 81 no. 7238, fig. 64.
 - ¹⁴ Phillips 2008, 145 nos. 275-276.
 - ¹⁵ *Ibidem*; Yule 1981, 148-149, 193.
 - ¹⁶ The oldest Cretan scarabs date from the Middle Minoan IA period and imitate early Middle Kingdom (late 11th-early 12th Dynasty) prototypes in the same material (steatite) but display other features than their Egyptian models, are executed in a different style of engraving and bear non-Egyptian designs. Daphna Ben-Tor started from a comparative study of their designs and features, but Felix Höflmayer arrived at the same chronological conclusions based on the archaeological contexts in which they were found (Ben-Tor 2006, 79-83; Höflmayer 2007; Phillips 2004).
 - ¹⁷ Red stone scarabs with cross designs do not seem to be attested in Cyprus, Rhodes or the other islands. Jacqueline Phillips mentions four parallels for the two scarabs from Knossos (Phillips 2008, 145 no. 275). One parallel (Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur Mainz, "CMS II,5 no. 70" in *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*, accessed April 2, 2012. [http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/browser/index.php?view\[layout\]=siegel_item&objektsiegel\[item\]=69&objektsiegel\[thumb_item\]=0](http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/browser/index.php?view[layout]=siegel_item&objektsiegel[item]=69&objektsiegel[thumb_item]=0)) is a seal impression and probably, like the second parallel (Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur Mainz, "CMS II,1 no. 448" in *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*, accessed April 2, 2012. [http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/browser/index.php?view\[layout\]=siegel_item&objektsiegel\[item\]=573&objektsiegel\[thumb_item\]=0](http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/browser/index.php?view[layout]=siegel_item&objektsiegel[item]=573&objektsiegel[thumb_item]=0)) not made of cornelian and belonging to the local Minoan production in other materials such as steatite, ivory and bone (*cf.* Yule 1981, 199). Moreover, neither represents a scarab-shaped seal. A third parallel circulated on the antiquities market in New York and is therefore meaningless in a discussion regarding the date and origin of this group of scarabs. Her fourth parallel, however, is a scarab from a Late Helladic (IIIA ?) tomb excavated in the Athenian agora (Blackmann 1999, 5-6, fig. 5).
 - ¹⁸ Ben-Tor 2007, 183; Tufnell, Martin and Ward 1984, 106.
 - ¹⁹ Brunton 1930, pl. XXXIV no. 22 (Badari, tomb group 5545, 18th-19th Dynasty), no. 75 (Badari, tomb group 5500, Arab); Brunton and Engelbach 1927, pl. XXII no. 20 (Gurob, tomb group 27, ca. 1523-1502 'Amenhotep I'), pl. XXIX no. 9 (Gurob, tomb 484, late 18th-19th Dynasty) (= Royal Museums of Art and History Brussels, inv. no. E.5794/3), pl.

- XLI no. 96 (Gurob, tomb 228, 18th-19th Dynasty); Dunham 1963, 52 fig. 37 (Meroe, west cemetery, W846, 25th-30th Dynasty); Engelbach 1915, pl. XVIII no. 75-77 (Riqqeh, New Kingdom tombs); Petrie 1891, pl. XXVI nos. 32 and 42 (Lahun/Kahun, Maket tomb, 18th Dynasty); Petrie 1906, pl. XXXVII no. 64 (Gheyta/Tell Yehud, Roman tomb); Petrie, Brunton and Murray 1923, pl. L (Lahun, tomb group 602 or 603, 22nd Dynasty); Petrie and Brunton 1924, pl. LVIII nos. 19-21 (Sedment, tomb 1723, mid 18th Dynasty), no. 28 (Sedment, tomb 1728), no. 36 (Sedment, tomb 2200, early 18th Dynasty), no. 40 (Sedment, tomb 1810, mid 18th Dynasty). The latter actually represents a plain scaraboid and a cowroid with X-design was discovered in the tomb of Maket at Lahun (Tufnell, Martin and Ward 1984, fig. 24 no. 37; not registered in Petrie 1891).
- ²⁰ Ward 1978, 34, table IX (Period Two = late First Intermediate Period; Period Three and Four = early Middle Kingdom).
- ²¹ Almost all the rulers of the 18th and 19th Dynasties have cornelian name scarabs, as noticed by Bertrand Jaeger (Jaeger 1993, 53-54). More have been found in the early 18th Dynasty burials of Dra Abu el-Naga (Metropolitan Museum inv. nos. 26.7.318, 26.7.319 and 26.7.501: Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Collection database on-line", accessed March 13, 2012, <http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections>). Another phenomenon is the use of cornelian for seal-amulets of royal women during the early 18th Dynasty (Jaeger 1982, n. 705).
- ²² For (mainly Ramesside) cornelian design scarabs found in the southern Levant, see Keel 1995, §375.
- ²³ See for instance 'jasper' and 'red jasper' for the following scarabs: Brunton 1930, pl. XXXIV nos. 22 and 75 (Badari); Brunton and Engelbach, 1927, pl. XXII no. 20 (Gurob); Petrie and Brunton 1924, pl. LVIII nos. 21 and 40 (Sedment). The small scarab from Abydos, now in the Egyptian collection of the Royal Museums of Art and History (inv. no. E.4409B), is also made of red jasper.
- ²⁴ Petrie 1891, 21-24, pl. XXVI.
- ²⁵ Tufnell, Martin and Ward 1984, 23-24, 106-114. This mid 18th Dynasty date was confirmed by Daphna Ben-Tor (by correspondence), who is preparing early 18th Dynasty scarabs from Hatshepsut's deposits at Deir el-Bahari and from the Assasif burials for publication (Ben-Tor, D. forthcoming).
- ²⁶ Petrie and Brunton 1924, 13-14 (Tomb 2200), 24 (Tomb 1810), 26 (Tomb 1723)
- ²⁷ Brunton and Engelbach 1927, 10, pl. XXII. The other seal-amulets from this context represent Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period heirlooms.
- ²⁸ Guy Brunton and Reginald Engelbach noticed: "*The pots however are typically of the XVIIIth dynasty, especially the brick-handled pots nos. 27 and 28, which we are accustomed to date to Thutmose III*" (Brunton and Engelbach 1927, 10).
- ²⁹ Petrie and Brunton 1924, 13-14, pl. XLVII.
- ³⁰ Aufrère 1991, 553-558; Wilkinson 1994, 106-107. Cornelian and red jasper are associated with the deities Seth, Horus, Hathor, Neith and Ra.
- ³¹ The choice of a particular material/color increased the power of the amulet (Wilkinson 1994, 88).
- ³² Ben-Tor 2011, 32, 36; Keel 1995, §582-585, 642; Phillips 2008, 116-118.
- ³³ For the cross and star motif in the Minoan glyptic tradition, see for instance Yule 1981, pl. 18-19. For the design on Iron Age stamp seals from the southern Levant and Mesopotamia, see Keel 1981, 206-207, abb. 22-23. For the Late Bronze Age Levant, Othmar Keel mentions cylinder seals where the X-motif accompanies goddesses (Keel 1981, 207, abb. 24-25).
- ³⁴ Keel interprets the motif as an emblem of the Syrian goddess or a marker for objects and people associated with her, and he refers to iconographical details on Late Bronze Age cylinder seals, Iron Age terracotta figurines and Phoenician ivories that seem to confirm an association with the Levantine Great Goddess (Keel 1981, 205-207).
- ³⁵ Wiese 1996, taf. 43-47 (Old Kingdom-First Intermediate Period stamp seals).
- ³⁶ Petrie, Brunton and Murray 1923, pl. LXIII no. 20 (Lahun); Régen and Soukiasian 2008, no. 353 (Gebel el-Zeit).
- ³⁷ Newberry 1907, pl. XII no. 37020 ("*glazed pottery*", "*mid Eighteenth Dynasty*") and 37141 ("*glass*", "*early Eighteenth Dynasty*").
- ³⁸ On the definition of "international style" and a state of research, see: Feldman 2006, 25-30.
- ³⁹ This subject is too vast to be treated here; un-Egyptian motifs were elaborately discussed by Pierre Montet (Montet 1937). It remains difficult to determine whether such objects can be assigned to a foreigner or to an Egyptian craftsman imitating imported objects (on this subject, see for instance: Montet 1937, 156, 163-164), whereas William Kelly Simpson, in his study of the Bubastis Treasure, concluded that 'exotic' motives are more likely expressions of an international style than indications for a foreign origin (Simpson 1959, 31, 43-44; See also: Feldman 2006, 30-41).
- ⁴⁰ The presence of Levantines in the Fayum is, for instance, discernable in the art of wood carving and in the local toponymy and anthroponymy (Kozloff *et al.* 1992, 340, 354; Redford 1992, 115; Wallert 1967, 53). For Levantines in Middle Egypt (Memphis, el-Amarna) during the 18th Dynasty, see for instance: Booth 2005, 32-33. In the Fayum itself, Levantines are attested at least from the Ramesside Period onwards (Gubel 2010; Sauneron and Yoyotte 2005). Levantine merchants, craftsmen and prisoners of war were welcomed into Egyptian society (see Booth 2005, 17-20 for Asiatic immigrants during the Middle Kingdom, Booth 2005, 31-33 for Syrians in Egypt during the New Kingdom).
- ⁴¹ Both Seth and Hathor are associated with cornelian and red jasper (Aufrère 1991, 553-558) and not only were they active in deserts and foreign lands, they were also assimilated with Levantine gods, respectively Ba'al (or the hybrid Seth-Ba'al) and the *Baalat Gubal*, the 'Lady of Byblos' (Wilkinson 2003, 101-102, 139, 143, 197; On Seth-Ba'al, see also: Eggler, J. 2007. "Baal" in *Iconography of Deities and Demons in the Ancient Near East*, last updated December 19, 2007. http://www.religionswissenschaft.unizh.ch/idd/prepublication/s/e_idd_baal.pdf). Considering the apparent absence of red stone scarabs with cross designs in the Delta and following

Keel's theory to link the X-motif with a goddess (*cf.* note 34), their production could hypothetically be related to Hathor rather than to Seth. This line of thought is, however, easily abandoned as it is not supported by archaeological evidence and red stone scarabs with cross designs are nearly completely absent in locations that are strongly connected to Hathor (such as Dendera, Gebel el-Zeit, Serabit el-Khadim, Timna, Byblos and Cyprus).

- ⁴² Ben-Tor 2007; Keel 1995, §82-98, 108; Keel 2004.
- ⁴³ Although the 'depressed' head is more frequently attested in the Ramesside Period and the 21st Dynasty, it is a feature that already appears during the mid 18th Dynasty (e.g. Keel 2010a, 46-47 no. 9, 136-137 no. 86).
- ⁴⁴ The base line of Figure 4 nos. 19 and 20 could, however, be cutting into the pronotum; this is not clear on the drawings and on the photographs published in the excavations reports.
- ⁴⁵ Under the 18th Dynasty, the Egyptian governor for the administrative district Canaan resided in Gaza and Egyptian garrisons were stationed in Deir el-Balah, Tell el-'Ajjul, Lachish, Tell el-Hesi, Jerusalem, Gezer, Jaffa, Megiddo, Bet Shean and Akko (Burke 2010, 59-60; Morris 2005, 136-142, 269-276, figs. 15-16, 20-21; Weinstein 1981, 12-15).
- ⁴⁶ Morris 2005, 382-395, fig. 29.
- ⁴⁷ Compare, for instance: Figure 2 no. 11 with Figure 4 no. 19 or Figure 2 no. 10 with Figure 3 nos. 2-3.
- ⁴⁸ Morris 2005, figs. 144-145, 278-279.
- ⁴⁹ Cuneiform tablets from the archives of Kamid el-Loz and from el-Amarna mention that a local ruler, Arahatu, was succeeded by a certain Puhuru, an Egyptian official residing in Kumidi (Pruzsinszky and Heinz 2008, 80-81, 85). Based on this textual evidence, Kumidi is generally considered to be an Egyptian base during the late 18th Dynasty and not from Thutmose III onwards (Morris 2005, 238-239).
- ⁵⁰ Heinz 2009, 318. For routes by which foreign objects could reach Kamid el-Loz, see: Heinz 2000, 360-361; Heinz 2009, fig. 1.
- ⁵¹ On the social significance of Egyptian imports see, for instance, Ahrens 2011 and Feldman 2006.
- ⁵² *Cfr. supra* note 49: under Akhenaten, the local ruler was replaced by an Egyptian representative.
- ⁵³ Heinz 2000, 362; Heinz 2009, 318, 320.
- ⁵⁴ The absolute dates for the Late Minoan IIIA1 period vary between the mid 15th and the early 14th century, roughly between 1490 and 1350 (*cf.* Betancourt, P. P. 1987. "Dating the Aegean Late Bronze Age with Radiocarbon", *Archaeometry* 29/1: 45-49; Cline, E. H. (ed.) 2010. *The Oxford Handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean*, New York: Oxford University Press, 18-24, table 2.2) and can subsequently encompass both the mid 18th Dynasty (Thutmose III to Thutmose IV) and the beginning of the late 18th Dynasty (Amenhotep III) (Cline 1991, 41).
- ⁵⁵ Cline 1987, 21-23. After the mid 18th Dynasty, the relations with the Minoans declined and contact with Mycenaeans increased. This is discernable in representations of Aegean peoples in Theban tombs (Cline 1987, 17-19). However, the two cornelian scarabs from Knossos arrived in Crete before the 'mycenaeanisation' of the island (Late Minoan IIIA2).
- ⁵⁶ Cline 1987, 11, 19; Cline 1991, 42.
- ⁵⁷ Cline 1998, 245-248. *Contra* the idea of Egyptian ambassadors in the Aegean, see e.g. Gates 2011, 388-389.
- ⁵⁸ The diplomatic function of the famous faience plaques of Amenhotep III from Mycenae is also subject to discussion (Cline 1990, 211; Gill 2010, 23-24; Van Wijngaarden 2011, 226-227). The presence of scarabs naming Amenhotep III and Tiy throughout the Aegean is even more ambiguous (Cline 1987, 6-13; Cline 1998, 246).
- ⁵⁹ Gill 2010, 30.
- ⁶⁰ Van Wijngaarden 2011, 240-241. The faience figurines representing monkeys from Mycenae and Tiryns were also interpreted as *bric-à-brac* by Eric H. Cline (Cline 1991, 40).
- ⁶¹ Cline 1987, 11.
- ⁶² For a discussion on imported raw amethyst and the recutting of imported amethyst objects in the Aegean, see Phillips 2009.
- ⁶³ Although it is more likely that even for the Levant maritime routes were taken (Weinstein 1998, 229-230).