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Jacqueline Phillips, *Aegyptiaca on the Island of Crete in Their Chronological Context: A Critical Review.*

Volume I and II (Contributions to the Chronology of the Eastern Mediterranean XVIII. Bietak, M. and H. Hunger [eds]).

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Nearly seventy years have passed since young and enthusiastic J. D. S. Pendlebury, pioneer in Aegean/Egyptian relations, first studied artefacts of Egyptian origin found in Minoan and Helladic contexts. Pendlebury's *Aegyptiaca* was a catalogue of Egyptian finds discovered on mainland Greece, Crete and the Aegean Islands, dating to Dynasty XXVI and earlier.¹ Despite being quite concise in format, and in perpetual need of updating and re-evaluation of its material, this significant work has inspired generations of researchers.²

In terms of Aegeo-Egyptian connections, Pendlebury's *Aegyptiaca* has been the spark to start a fire of archaeological research in the twentieth century. In its own turn, Jacqueline Phillips's recently published book, *Aegyptiaca on the Island of Crete in Their Chronological Context: A Critical Review*, is meant to keep this fire alive and brighter than ever.

The present study, which consists of two volumes, is based on the re-visited and updated PhD thesis of the author, submitted in 1991 to the University of Toronto.³ Developed with care and commitment, it provides a catalogue of all

1 Pendlebury, J. D.S. (1930) *Aegyptiaca*. Cambridge: University Press.

2 Only a few can be mentioned here. Among them, Vercoutter (1956), Warren (1969), Lambrou-Phillipson (1990), Cline (1994) and Karetsou *et al.* (2000).

3 Phillips, J. S. (1991) *The impact and implications of the Egyptian and Egyptianizing material found in Bronze Age Crete ca. 3000-ca. 1100 B.C.* PhD Thesis. University of

known Egyptian and indigenous 'Egyptianising' material found in Bronze Age Minoan contexts, and also those without archaeological context, dating to Dynasty XX and earlier.

Volume I

A brief introduction, a chapter on previous studies of this subject and another one on chronological considerations in Egyptian and Aegean chronology open this Volume. In the following chapters the material is divided into two categories: artefact types and iconographic images. Both are discussed thoroughly and from a critical point of view. Additionally, emphasis is given to their impact on Minoan culture.

Categories of objects discussed in Volume I (chapters 4 to 11, with their appendices and annexes) include stone vessels in their individual types (e.g. alabastra, amphorae, bowls, jars, etc.), faïence and glass, ceramics, scarabs, seals, beads, ostrich eggshells and figurative objects. With each artefact group being presented in a separate chapter, special attention is given to their development within Egypt and, additionally, the comparative development of the same object type in Crete.⁴ In both cases, catalogue numbers, given in bold, refer to the detailed description and discussion of each object in Volume II.

The second part of Volume I discusses Egyptian iconographic images which entered and influenced Bronze Age Minoan culture. These include the hippopotamus goddess '*Taweret*' converted to Minoan '*Genius*', the ape image, the swan/goose/duck '*Regardant*' image and the cat, crocodile, and '*Gravidenflaschen*' form of anthropomorphic vessels.⁵ All iconographic scenes,

Toronto.

4 Both authentic Egyptian material imported to Crete and Minoan-made 'Egyptianising' material, are discussed. The term '*Egyptianising*' is given by Phillips to describe indigenous Minoan objects originating from, or inspired by, the Egyptian World (Phillips 2008: Vol I, 14).

5 The image of swans, geese and ducks with their necks twisted around so that the heads

such as the finds in the first part of this volume, are presented according to their spatial and chronological distribution in Egypt and on Crete. Again, catalogue numbers, given in bold, function as references to the detailed description of the scenes in Volume II. Chapter 19 in Volume I provides a chronological summary and a number of conclusions based on the review of the examined material. Lastly, thirty-nine distribution maps of Crete, where artefacts are presented based on their object group and date, along with an extensive bibliography on the subject, also accompany this volume.

Volume II

Volume II provides a detailed catalogue of all artefacts and iconographic scenes mentioned in Volume I. Finds and scenes are placed into groups in terms of their archaeological site (for example, Aghia Triadha, Knossos, Gournia, and so on). After a brief introduction and presentation of the site, each of the finds is thoroughly described and linked with a sketch shown in the 'Illustrations of the Catalogued Objects'.⁶ In addition to the description of the object or scene, information provided in the catalogue includes: origin, originality (i.e. Egyptian, 'Egyptianising', clearly Minoan, or other), material and measurements, archaeological context, chronology, artistic style and technique, comparanda and iconographic parallels, acknowledgements to previous studies and comments of the author. A full bibliography of artefact locations, as well as publication references, is also included in the book.

What makes the study special is the fact that the author has considered the new, and occasionally still disputed, data in Egyptian and Aegean Chronology. However, Phillips has made it clear since the beginning that:

For the purposes of the present study, absolute dates

rest on their back is called '*Regardan*' and is associated with Ancient Egyptian Art (Phillips 2008: Vol I, 183). '*Gravidentflaschen*' is a special term to describe anthropomorphic vessels, made of travertine, clay or ivory, in the form of a female figure with a swollen abdomen (Phillips 2008: Vol. I, 214).

6 Each site is briefly described before its individual catalogue of objects or scenes is presented. Chronology of the site is given, along with further references and notes.

are not all that important, but the relative correlations between Crete and Egypt are very important. Once these are established, an absolute chronology can be argued with more precision, at least within the more closely datable Egyptian chronology and regnal history.

(Vol. I: 34)

Therefore, all contexts and objects presented in her study are not linked to absolute dating, but to a range of dates within which the object or context is known to have been made and used.

A closer look at the two volumes, and taking into consideration its price, makes it clear that this work is written to target a limited number of readers, i.e. researchers with a solid background of knowledge in Egyptian and Aegean archaeology and the issues of chronology in the Mediterranean. This is not the average book that one would find in one's local council library. On the contrary, it is a specialised study. Even so, the power of narration and description in Volume I makes this work appear more attractive than any typical catalogue of archaeological material. Moreover, illustrations and maps give vigour to the text and make the context more easily-digested and understood. It appears that Phillips has spent a significant amount of time researching her material, and, when it comes to putting it together in the form of a book, she makes every effort to explain things in the most comprehensible and coherent way. She includes every detail possible in order to answer most of the inquiries her readers may wish to express. Her work is innovative, original and mature. Her commentary gives food for thought for future generations of researchers. Overall, this study is worth every penny, and all academic institutions should have a copy of it in their library. One could easily predict that this archaeological study will be frequently discussed in following years.

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