Out of the Word and Out of the Picture?
Keftiu and Materializations of ‘Minoans’

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ABSTRACT ‘Minoans’ have been recognised as pre-Hellenic race or closed ethnic group in Egyptian representations of Aegean figures from Eighteenth Dynasty Theban tombs. Modern construct of ‘Minoans’ thus merged with an ancient Egyptian construct of Aegean foreigners. Previous approaches to Aegean figures in Theban tombs did not pay attention to decorum, context and restricted knowledge. By examining these concepts it is argued in this paper that decorum can transform restricted knowledge into available knowledge for the tomb visitors. The abducted meanings from these images materialized virtual reality different from reality based on the tomb-owner’s restricted knowledge. However, this abducted virtual reality can actually take the form of reality for those who lack specific restricted knowledge. Based on decorum analysis it can be argued that New Kingdom Egyptians perceived Keftiu and its inhabitants as quite close to their cultural concept of ‘north’ and ‘Asia’, observable both in visual and written evidence.

Fabricating ‘the Minoans’ through Egyptian images

Arthur Evans discovered and simultaneously created ‘Minoan’ civilization from the archaeological remains entangled with modernist metanarratives of ancient Greece as the cradle of civilization (Papadopoulos 2005; Hamilakis 2006:146-149; Hamilakis & Momigliano 2006:27-28). He considered the term ‘Minoan’ to have been used in an ethnic sense already by ancient Greeks, as it appears as a toponym for traditional settlements on Crete (Evans 1921:1-2). However, in 1900 when he made his discovery, Minos was known only from several quite later texts. Thucydides in the fifth century B.C. described Minos in ‘The History of the Peloponnesian War’ as the first navy lord, master of the Aegean Sea and Cyclades, and the first colonizer who fought piracy (Thucydides I. IV). Evans, clearly influenced, wrote that ‘Minoan’ Knossos had naval dominion over the Mediterranean Sea long before Venice (Evans 1921:25). However, there were no thalassocracies in the Late Bronze Age Mediterranean (Knapp 1993:333). The myth of a thalassocracy of Minos was probably invented by or for the Athenian overseas hegemony (Papadopoulos 2005:94).
Maybe the most intriguing element of Evans’ metanarrative on the ‘Minoans’ was his use of the concept of ‘race’. Evans was a racist par excellence, stated by himself in his account from Bosnia and Herzegovina. He wrote that he did not appreciate the ‘égalitaire’ spirit of Bosniacs who warmly addressed strangers as ‘brat’ (brother) or ‘(kom)shija’ (neighbour), and that he believes in the existence of inferior races and would like to see them exterminated, but these were ‘personal mislikings’ (Evans 1877:312). He later wrote that craniometrical results and other bodily measurements may imply that in Minoan times a large part of the population belonged to the long-headed Mediterranean Race (Evans 1921:8). Evans also recognized ‘Minoans’ in representations of Aegean figures in Theban Eighteenth Dynasty tombs (Figs. 1-5). Providing analogies in archaeological material for representations of objects carried by Aegean figures in tombs of Senenmut, Useramun, Menkheperreseneb and Rekhmire he gave historical reality both to his construction of ‘Minoans’ and Egyptian representations.

Evans equated ‘Minoans’ with the Egyptian term Keftiu (kꜣtjw). This term is attested for the first Syrian figure in the first register of the scene with foreign figures in the tomb of Menkheperreseneb (Fig. 1) and in the case of Aegean type figures in the tomb of Rekhmire - where they are not labelled only with Keftiu (Fig. 2). Thus, ‘Minoans’ became Keftiu, and Keftiu became people who lived on Crete in the Late Bronze Age (Evans 1928:737‒748). Arthur Evans was not an Egyptologist, so he did not take into account that the Keftiu refers to a land, and not its inhabitants, as the word is written with the Egyptian determinative for land (Erman & Grapow 1971:122).
Different authors, such as Georg Steindorff and Harry Reginald Hall, like Evans before them, described physical characteristics (skin colour, hair, nose profile), approaching images in Egyptian tombs as distinct ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ types, strongly emphasizing their ‘European’ characteristics. Objects carried by the Aegean figures were described as objects of a particular archaeological culture (‘Minoan’ or ‘Mycenean’) using analogies in the archaeological material (Hall 1902:162-175; 1904: 1914:201; 1928:199-206; Pendlebury 1930:82). Terms such as ‘race’ or ‘cultural area’ were used before the concept of archaeological culture, while the term culture was usual in the archaeology of 1920s (Jones 1997:16‒17). However, with the emergence of cultural-historical archaeology emphasis was put on archaeological culture as a clear determinant of a ‘people’. Material remains were undoubtedly read as remains of enclosed, unique ethnic groups as stated by Vere Gordon Childe in his definition of archaeological culture as the material expression of ‘a people’ (Childe 1929, V‒VI). ‘Minoans’ became ‘people’, now by definition, in an ethnic sense, and not a racial one.

Fig. 2. TT 100: Rekhmire. Aegean figures in front of Egyptian officials, drawing (after Davies 1943: Plate XVIII).

Not all scholars accepted that the term Keftiu refers to Crete and that Aegean figures in Theban tombs were ‘Minoans’. Gerald Averay Wainwright argued that only 21% of objects carried by Aegean figures are Cretan. He identified Aegean figures in tombs of Senenmut (Fig. 3) and Useramun as ‘Minoans’ based on ‘Minoan’ objects they carry and the inscription referring to figures from the tomb of Useramun as coming from ‘all islands in the middle of wḏ wṛ (sea)’. Then he excluded all these objects and the figures carrying them from the register with Aegean figures in the tomb of Rekhmire. As the accompanying text in the tomb of Rekhmire names Aegean figures as coming both from Keftiu and ‘all islands in the middle of wḏ wṛ’, he thought that the non-excluded figures should represent Keftiu (Wainwright 1931:2–7). This direct analogy is only one extreme of cultural-historical approach to Aegean images and objects they carry. John Strange, however, still referring to Aegean figures as ‘ethnic types’ and to their ‘culture, dress and racial characteristics’ completely discredited the
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idea that images are relevant for the study of Keftiu. The term in some tombs refers to Syrian figures, or iconographically hybrid Syrian-Aegean figures, and sometimes it is followed by other terms such as ‘islands in the middle of $\text{w}^2\text{d} \ \text{wr}$’. He concluded that Keftiu refers to Cyprus (Strange 1980:145-184).

Jean Vercoutter greatly influenced later scholars in his definite identification of Keftiu as Crete, and Aegean figures as ‘Minoans’ referring to them as pre-Hellenes (Vercoutter 1954:47-70). Later scholars influenced by his seminal work identified Keftiu unambiguously as Crete (Sakellarakis & Sakellarakis 1984:202; Strøm 1984:193; Wachsmann 1987:98-99; Panagiotopoulos 2001:263-265; Hallmann 2006). As for the term ‘islands in the middle of $\text{w}^2\text{d} \ \text{wr}$’, several authors interpreted it differently as the ‘Minoan colonial empire’ (Strøm 1984:193), Cyclades (Sakellarakis & Sakellarakis 1984:202), a part of Keftiu territory or a neighbouring region (Wachsmann 1987:98-99), or a network of smaller communities not bound to one single territory (Sherratt & Sherratt 1998:339).

Contrary to identification of Keftiu as Crete and $\text{w}^2\text{d} \ \text{wr}$ as Mediterranean Sea there are scholars who identified $\text{w}^2\text{d} \ \text{wr}$ as the Egyptian delta, and therefore Keftiu as ‘Minoans’ settled in the delta (Nibbi 1975:9-49; Vandersleyen 1988:75-79; 2002:109-112; 2003:209-211; Duhoux 2003:211-228; MacGillivray 2009). Claude Vandersleyen emphasized in several of his papers that Keftiu is to be located in Asia according to his interpretations of references to this term in the Annals of Thutmose III and the topographical list from Kom el-Hetan. However, the identification of
The tradition of describing physical characteristics (skin colour, hair, nose profile) in Egyptian art in order to make ethnic attributions of figures was very influential. However, there were those who argued contrary, that Egyptian representations are not photographs of reality, concentrating on transference of figures, objects and iconographical elements and iconographical hybridization (Kantor 1947:42-55; Wachsmann 1987:4-12).

The images of Aegean figures were mostly used as an iconographical addition to a metanarrative of a bound unique ethnic group known as ‘Minoans’. However, the Late Bronze Age inhabitants of the Aegean and Egypt did not share their view of identity and ethnicity with western Europeans in the late nineteenth century and after. In order to better understand these images we should pay more attention to the context in which they appear together with the status and purpose of Egyptian art and the Egyptian view of Others.

Aegean figures and objects as wrw and jnw

Aegean figures in Theban tombs are represented in scenes in which foreigners are depicted bearing different objects and piling them in front of Egyptian officials (Fig. 4). Foreigners in these scenes are ordered into distinct registers which are enclosed, like with a bracket, by a figure of a deceased individual to whom the tomb with these scenes belongs (Davies 1922, 1934, 1943; Säve-Söderbergh 1957; Porter & Moss 1960; Wachsmann 1987; Dorman 1991; Dziobek 1994; Hallmann 2006). So far, Aegean figures are known in tombs of Senenmut, Intef, Useramun, Menkheperreseneb.
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and Rekhmire (Figs. 1-5). The term Keftiu signifying Aegean figures in the tomb of Rekhmire (as a place of origin together with the term ‘islands in the middle of wȝd wȝr’) also appears in tombs of Menkheperreseneb and Amenemhab, but here this term signifies Syrian figures, some of which carry Aegean objects (Sethe 1909:908-929; Breasted 1906:301; Davies 1943:20; Hallmann 2006:29-46). Aegean figures are distinguished by their reddish skin colour (similar to the skin colour of Egyptian men in iconography), curly hair, beardless faces, and breechcloths in the tombs of Senenmut, Intef, Puimre, Useramun and the first phase of the tomb of Rekhmire, and Aegean kilts in the tombs of Menkheperreseneb and the second phase of the tomb of Rekhmire. Syrian figures are recognised by a yellow skin colour, bearded faces and clothing which might be described as particular kilts different from those of the Aegean and long robes.

Hybrid iconographical figures are also known from these tombs. The earliest iconographical hybrid with Aegean elements is known from the tomb of Puimre (Fig. 4). The figure from the scene with four foreign princes in the tomb of Puimre shares elements in skin colour and hair style of Aegean figures and clothes of Syrian figures (Davies 1922:87-92; Wachsmann 1987:29-30). Syrian-Aegean iconographically hybrid figures are known from the tomb of Menkheperreseneb where they occupy the second and third register of the scene with foreigners together with Syrian figures and only several Aegean figures (Hallmann 2006:30). So far the only detailed iconographical study, conducted by Wachsmann, observed that hybridity can be seen not only in depicted figures of foreigners, but also in the objects they carry. He also pointed to a high level of transference, a phenomenon in Egyptian art when objects, figures or entire parts of scenes are transferred from one scene into another to which it need not have been connected (1987:12).

Latest studies have put more emphasis on the events these scenes represent in order to better understand Egyptian foreign policy, and in this specific case Egyptian-Aegean interrelations and Late Bronze Age gift-exchange (Panagiotopoulos 2001). Available evidence suggests that these scenes represent an important moment in the professional lives of the deceased owners of the tombs. An overview of the titles held by the tomb owners suggests that they were high-ranking officials in temples and the court; overseers of temple estates, treasuries, granaries and workshops; high priests and viziers; commandants and generals (Davies 1922:28-31; Säve-Söderbergh 1957:13; Schulman 1964:34-55; Dorman 1991:179; Dziobek 1994:62-101; Eichler 2000; Hallmann 2006). They belonged to a close circle of the Egyptian elite, and an even closer circle of the court elite, or what Kate Spence calls ‘court society’ (2007:276). Their tombs show a number of architectural, design and decorative similarities which singles them out from the rest of the population together with other officials buried in the necropolises of Dra Abu el-Naga, Sheikh Abd el-Gurna, Kohka and Qurnet Murrai (Fitzenreiter 1995:95). Their prestige was in their occupations, duties and
proximity to the king. The events in the palace they were part of were closed to those who were not part of the court society.

Letters from the Amarna archive are a valuable testimony of important events such as a court visit by foreign emissaries. These letters also show that foreign rulers did not travel around Late Bronze Age courts, but sent embassies to conclude deals, whether or not these were gift exchanges, political and military alliances or marriages (Moran 1992; Liverani 2001: 71-76; Bryce 2003: 78-79). However, these court visits by foreign embassies are known before the Amarna period, and exactly some of the New Kingdom Theban tomb scenes are visual representations of these visits by foreigners usually interpreted as foreign princes. Texts accompanying Aegean figures and objects they carry in some of these tombs refer to Aegean objects as jnw. Late Ramesside Papyrus Koller describes a ceremony on court in which jnw was presented in front of the king, officials and foreigners. The same papyrus also mentions that the official to whom the text is related was scared and his arm became weak because of the event (Gnirs 2009: 28-29). The fact that the tomb owners represented it in their tombs is further confirmation of how important this event must have been.

However, among Egyptologists there is not definite agreement in what the term jnw actually means and how to interpret it. Some translations that have been put forward include ‘tribute’ (Müller-Wallerman 1983; Boochs 1984), ‘special deliveries’ (Redford 2003: 246), ‘supply on denotative meaning level’ (Liverani 2001: 179) and ‘gift’ (Bleiberg 1983, 1984, 1996; Panagiotopoulos 2001: 270). The literal translation would be ‘something brought’ as indicated by the determinative and the fact that it is noun derived from an extended use of a passive participle (Redford 2003: 246). Edward Bleiberg analysed this term and its appearance from Old to New Kingdom and refers to it as an ‘official gift’, explaining it using the definition of the gift provided by Marcel Mauss in his seminal work. Bleiberg argues that jnw was exchanged between Egyptian king, other Egyptians and foreigners who were treated in the same way no matter the level of dependence to Egyptian state. He sees jnw exchange as an exchange on a personal level between the king and foreign rulers, chiefs, princes and kings. jnw was considered to have been an aspect of kingship and it was delivered directly to the king or his representative. The king also gave it to temples and necropolis workers; however, it was not part of wider redistribution (Bleiberg 1983: 132-134; 1984: 157-167; 1996: 90-114).

If the interpretation of jnw as the gift in Mauss’ terms is to be accepted then we should question if jnw was actually exchanged as the gift according to anthropological definition. The prerequisite is that it is exchanged between equal partners of exchange, that it forms strong ties between them, that time plays an important role in its exchange and that the exchange is reciprocal (Mauss 1990). However, there are already problems in establishing personal ties, as jnw was not given to the Egyptian king only by individuals, but by groups also (Müller-Wallermann 1983: 84). That the
partners were equal cannot be said according to available textual data and iconography, as we lack representations of Egyptian kings giving back any gifts to foreign rulers. This does not mean that an Egyptian king did not send any gifts at all; rather it means that these objects were not labelled as jnw. Time did play an important role in the exchange of jnw, as the available New Kingdom data point suggests that it was brought annually, most probably for the New Year’s festival. For this there are at least two testimonies, one is from the tomb of Menkheperreseneb, and the other from the tomb of Amennedjeh (Bleiberg 1996:95-96; Liverani 2001:180; Panagiotopoulos 2001:269; Hallmann 2006:10-14). That the exchange was not reciprocal is confirmed by the fact that there are no known records or representations of jnw being given to foreigners by the Egyptian king, rather they are receiving t’w nj ’nh (‘the breath of life’) from him (Müller-Wollermann 1983:84).

In order to better understand the meaning of jnw, especially in connection with the Aegean figures, it is important to take a closer look at how the jnw bearers in Theban tombs are represented. First of all they are described with several phrases, such as the one referring to the fact that they brought jnw.sn Hr psd.sn (‘their jnw on their backs’) in the tombs of Menkheperreseneb and Rekhmire (Strange 1980:45-51; Bleiberg 1984:157; Bleiberg 1996:91-92). They are described and represented as in proskynesis, that is sn t3 (‘kissing the soil’), with bent heads, that is m w3h tpw, or by leaning towards, that is m ksw (Boochs 1984:63). The representations of these body techniques are also known among Aegean figures in the tombs of Intef, Menkheperreseneb and Amenemhab (Säve-Söderbergh 1957:15; Hallmann 2006:29-45). Some authors consider this as proof that Aegeans were subject to Egypt or that they were vassals (Strom 1984:192; Marinatos 2010:4). However, certainly no one could have approached the king without proper gestures, and these would not have to be interpreted as clear signs of political subjection (Bleiberg 1983:138; Panagiotopoulos 2001:272).

Aegean figures, Syrian-Aegean hybrid figures and Syrian figures labelled with the term Keftiu, are also referred to as wrw in the tombs of Puimre, Menkheperreseneb and Rekhmire (Sethe 1909:1098-1099; Davies 1922:90; 1943:20; Hallmann 2006). wrw should be understood here as the term for foreign princes, or ‘great ones’, deriving from wr meaning ‘great, big’ (Erman & Grapow 1971:328-329; Müller-Wollermann 1983:84). If we understand them as rulers of foreign countries, here represented as bringing jnw, we should not forget that later letters from Amarna suggest that rulers did not actually travel around in person, but sent emissaries and embassies instead as previously mentioned. This is indeed a problem if we remain on a problematic interpretative pathway such as the one from which we write our own world view into these images. Donald B. Redford argued that there is no single modern term or category to cover all occurrences of jnw, and that it arises from a thoroughly Egyptian ideology. It is a peculiar term for home consumption (Redford 2003:246-247).
Egyptological studies of art suffered greatly from providing definitions of Egyptian terms by identifying images and words which follow them. The custom is to locate examples in tomb relief where the word in question lay above or immediately next to what we then argue was a representation of the object labelled by that specific word. Kent R. Weeks has criticised this line of thought in approaching Egyptian images. He argues that when Egyptologists find another representation labelled by the same term, but different from the representation considered to be significant, they keep their initial interpretation and start speaking about artist’s lack of skills in carving or painting or erroneous labelling of the figure by the scribe (Weeks 1979:62). The same case can be observed in previous studies of Aegean figures represented in the Theban Eighteenth Dynasty tombs. When hybrid figures emerge they are considered errors of the artist, and when some unexpected words label images they are considered erroneous too (Pendlebury 1930:82). However, there are also those who were aware of hybridism and transference, but still explained hybrid figures in ethnic terms (Hittites or ‘Syro-Keftians’), clearly ethnically defining them and classifying at the same time (Hall 1928:200-204; Wachsmann 1987:8). Some even went as far as to exclude Egyptian images as relevant for the study of terms such as Keftiu (Strange 1980:145-184). What is an even bigger issue in this case is that not only were the objects and words too easily connected or disconnected during the interpretation, but also that the object itself is problematic. Namely, what is represented, ‘Minoans’ as a ‘race’, ‘people’, or ‘nation’? Were there ever ‘Minoans’? Critics of Weeks point to the lack of context in these approaches to Egyptian images, and the problem of unaware ‘writing in’ of our world view. He offered numerous examples showing how these approaches fail when dealing with Egyptian images (Weeks 1979:65). Thus, I will continue below agreeing that the context of these images forms a starting point in resolving certain problems with images and words.

Restricted knowledge, decorum, secondary agency and reality of the virtual

The deceased witnessed and played an important role in an event within the restricted space of the palace. Not only were the scenes with foreigners an important event in the career and life of a tomb owner, but they were representations of a highly closed event, an event that formed the basis for knowledge restricted to many as previously argued. The term restricted knowledge was introduced in Egyptology by John Baines in order to better understand connections between power, knowledge and decorum (1990:20-23). It is known that foreign tributes, booty and gifts were brought by emissaries of different foreign countries, and that their presentation on/by Egyptian court could invoke curious ambiguities (Redford 2003:247; Feldman 2006:174-175). The most famous is the case of the letter of complaints of Kadashman-Enlil, king of Babylon, to Amenhotep III. Apparently, chariots sent as gifts from Babylon were
presented together with vassal tribute in a court ceremony in Egypt (Moran 1992:2). In these tombs all known scenes representing foreigners bringing objects to the Egyptian court are located in the traverse hall (Porter & Moss 1960). These tombs were regularly visited by family, friends and others who together with the deceased formed a community united in the cult of the dead and ancestral cult which served to secure the future existence of the deceased (Fitzenreiter 1995:96‒97).

However, when looking at representations of these court-based events in the tombs, meant to be seen also by those who did not have the privilege to attend, we are left with Aegean princes bringing jnw in exchange for the breath of life, even though we know that rulers were not present, but rather their emissaries. Restricted knowledge is here transformed by art into images appropriate for the tomb and its visitors. Next to the term restricted knowledge, John Baines introduced one more highly useful concept in Egyptological studies of visual and written culture. For Baines, Egyptian art was ordered by decorum which he explains as ‘a set of rules and practices defining what may be represented and pictorially with captions, displayed, and possibly written down, in which context and in what form’ (1990:20).

As a concept decorum may not correspond to any word in the ancient Egyptian language, but it is a principle observable in the material, actions and representations, and was probably deeply embedded not to require any formulation (similarly to Bourdieu’s habitus). According to Baines, parallels between decorum and restricted knowledge are important not only because of power relations but also because of the sacral character of a great deal of knowledge. Decorum is deeply connected to enacting and representing the proper order of the world. Baines views decorum as a ‘total social fact’ referring to the work of Marcel Mauss (Baines 2006:15-30). I would like to point out that decorum can transform restricted knowledge into more widely available knowledge by ordering how some things and events ought to look, and not how they really looked or did not look. Thus material culture plays a crucial role as an agent of these transformations and orderings.

Recent archaeological discussions have underlined the difference between material culture and materiality slowly but surely exchanging the former term with the later (Meskell 2004:1-7; Miller 2005:4-15; Tilley 2007:17-20), however, without any clear distinctions between the two (Fahlander 2008:129-131). The focus shifted from studies of meanings and symbols, thus material culture as text, to material culture as possessing agency, be that secondary agency, pseudo agency or human-like agency (Olsen 2003:95-96; Meskell 2004:4-9; Miller 2005:11-15; Fahlander 2008:131-136; Knappet & Malafouris 2008). Major theoretical background was found in the works of Alfred Gell (1998) and Bruno Latour (1999; 2005). Alfred Gell (1998:6) approached ‘art as a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it,’ rejecting a semiotic approach and arguing that art is not like a text. He puts more emphasis on agency, intention,
causation, result and transformation (Gell 1998:6). Moreover it was argued that
post-humanocentric studies of agency of material culture cannot go together with
hermeneutic perspectives dealing with meaning and interpretation (Fahlander
2008:131). This can easily stray away to, in my opinion, a quite dangerous dichot-
omy between language and materiality. We should acknowledge that materiality is
bound up with signification from the start (Butler 1993:30). Proponents of Gell’s
anthropological theory of art have stressed that even in his work semiotics are not
completely an aside (Tanner & Osborne 2007:8-12).

Gell’s ‘art nexus’ is useful in explaining the effects of decorum in four basic
concepts (prototype, artist, index and recipient) where prototype is an entity
represented in the image, index is the art work/object/image, and recipient is the
observer (Gell 1998). These concepts are in mutual agent-patient relation, thus
allowing material culture (images) to affect the observer and to captivate him. The
formula discussed in this paper would be:

\[ [[[\text{Recipient-A} \rightarrow \text{Artist-A}] \rightarrow \text{Prototype-A}] \rightarrow \text{Index-A}] \rightarrow \text{Recipient-P}. \]

The larger arrow at the end represents what is referred to as the core of the situation
in which the index acts as agent towards recipients as patients (Gell 1998:59; Tanner
& Osborne 2007:14). Here recipients would be both tomb owners (Recipient-A)
and tomb visitors (Recipient-P). The key difference is that tomb owners, Egyptian
artists (Artist-A), Aegean emissaries (Prototype-A) and the represented scenes
(Index-A) are agents and tomb visitors patients. It is important to include here
the agency of the tomb owner and his restricted knowledge which is here trans-
formed into available knowledge (Index and abducted meanings). Inclusion of the
tomb-owner’s agency explains why Aegean figures appear as \( wruw \) and the objects
they bring as \( jnw \). The problem with tomb-owner’s agency is in the fact that it is
in parallel, if not colliding with, the agency of decorum itself, because canonical
representations in ancient Egypt were manufactured by artists working within the
tightly constrained parameters of a system of craft-specialized production and this
canonical depiction took the primary ontology (the divine plan) as a prototype
(Davis 2007:216-217). The artist would in this case be no more than a medium
for the tomb-owner’s agency being primary.

Gell’s algebra used here could of course be further elaborated by adding the king
and gods as primary agents; however I argue that their inclusion is already implied
in decorum. Objects which were brought by emissaries or ambassadors from the
Aegean as gifts to be returned by the Egyptian king are represented in Theban tombs
as objects exchanged for the breath of life, and not reciprocal gifts, and brought by
princes, not their representatives. This can be interpreted in different ways, and and
these need not mutually exclude each other. It is very possible that the deceased
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represented scenes according to *mAat* (order and harmony) and ideology of kingship, representing his king as an invincible universal ruler of the world. Egyptian canons of representation had a continuous role in legitimating the social and immutable and eternal cosmic order embodied in kingship. Kingship and cosmology were known to many beholders principally by pictorial representations and for some solely by them (Davis 2011:19). Mario Liverani argues that incoming goods labelled as *jnw* were used for propaganda purposes for the sake of control of inner Egyptian populace (Liverani 2001:180). Being that these events were highly unpredictable, as it was previously argued based on papyrus Koller and later Amarna letters, maybe the tomb owners wanted to control these events for the afterlife, when they were to continue their duties. If they were unpredictable in their life, like previously argued, why not bind them in image for the afterlife? This would probably be a magical relief. Nevertheless, what is crucial here is that all of this, however interpreted, is achieved via images.

The power/knowledge game was particularly important for the perception of reality. It is my opinion that restricted knowledge about court ceremonies and their participants can be understood as ‘reality’, and the abducted meanings construct ‘the virtual’. What is interesting is that virtual reality can in the end become as real as reality (Žižek 2002:11), and abducted meanings directed by the tomb owner through images as secondary agencies can be as real as restricted knowledge, at least for those who do not possess it. In simulating reality through representation/image as an artificial medium, what is necessary is to reproduce these features that make the image realistic from a spectator’s point of view (Žižek 2005:334). Images are thus not mirrors of reality, but what they share with mirrors is the power of transformation (Gombrich 1960:5). They can structure parallel social worlds perceived as realities. Here they transformed the reality of diplomacy into virtual reality of ancient Egyptian kingship and domination, and back again into the reality of the virtual for those who did not attend the ceremonies and lacked the restricted knowledge. Images materialized events according to decorum and the Egyptian privileged world view (spectator’s point of view). Thus, there are no true and false meanings of images; rather they are contextually true or false depending on the abduction. We ought to examine this boundary defining the real and the false. In the end several events can be simultaneously materialized with each and every materialization depending on the observer’s status and knowledge.

Conclusion: Towards a cultural ‘topography’ of the Aegean figures and Keftiu

Representations of Aegean figures and Syrian-Aegean hybrid figures are especially interesting from the point of view of decorum and materiality. Namely, Aegean figures are hybridised only with Syrian figures (Tomb of Puimre, Tomb of Menkheperreseneb); Aegean objects are transferred to Syrian figures and visa versa; the term Keftiu labels
Syrian figures in the tomb of Menkheperreseneb and Amenemhab (Fig. 5). Thus, it is clear that there is a predetermined connection between what we identify as 'Aegean' and 'Syrian'; as there are no hybridisations of Aegean elements with other elements accept 'Syrian'. As for transference, there are only a few examples of transference of other elements (non-Syrian) into registers with Aegean figures. Regarding hybridisation it was previously argued by Wachsmann (1987:8) that this is a consequence of an artist’s desire to vary colour scheme or a way to represent an unseen ‘people’ – Hittites. I disagree with the first idea because it explains only hybridisation, and not the quite specific transference of iconographic elements and accompanying texts as well (Syrian vessels into Aegeans scenes). Also, why would there be a hybrid figure among four northern princes in the tomb of Puimre? Why would the artist vary colour of only one of the four figures? Diamantis Panagiotopulos, referring to hybrid objects and transference, suspects that there was Egyptian incapability or indifference in clearly distinguishing foreign artistic traditions (2012:56). However, that there were entirely nonarbitrary decorum ordered transferences and hybridisations indicates anything but incapability or indifference. All these questions lead to the question of hybridisation fusing together unlike things, at least at the first glance.

Fig. 5. TT 85: Amenemhab. Syrian figures labelled as kfitw and mnnws, third register, drawing (after Davies 1934: Plate XXV).
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Decorum is that which is clearly determining what is to be transferred and where and what can be hybridised. Since it is closely related to a culturally specific world view, it is interesting to question this connection between ‘Aegean’ and ‘Syrian’ further. The tomb of Puimre names the Aegean-Syrian hybrid figure as coming from the far north, from ‘Asia’ (Davies 1922:90). Aegean figures, together with Syrian ones, were associated with the lands in the north, while Nubian figures were associated with regions to the south in the tomb of Menkheperreseneb (Strange 1980:16-56). Turning to other evidence related to Keftiu, ‘The London Medical Papyrus’ mentions two spells in the Keftiu language and one of them was used against an ‘Asiatic’ disease (Strange 1980:99-101; Kyriakidis 2002:211-216). If we bear in mind that there are numerous examples in Egyptian magic where like is used to fight like (Ritner 1993) we can perhaps argue for one more element connecting Keftiu and Aegean figures with the Egyptian concept of ‘Asia’. Maybe this is one possible way to understand the famous Aegean list on a statue base of Amenhotep III from his temple at Kom el-Hetan on the left bank of the Nile facing Luxor (Strange 1980:21-27; Wachsmann 1987:98; Cline & Stannish 2011). The fact that the terms Keftiu and twnAyw, here associated with Aegean toponyms, can also be found in association with Syrian toponyms in Egyptian texts, doesn’t necessarily indicate that Keftiu and twnAyw can be physically located in Syria-Palestine in the Late Bronze Age (contra Vandersleyen 2003:210-211).

The connection between Keftiu and the north in Egyptian cultural geography, more precisely to the northern horizon, was already emphasized by Joachim Quack, who located Keftiu in the northern land of the gods, and identified it with Crete (1996:77-79). His conclusions are confirmed by decorum based analysis in this paper. The basic problem is that the majority of previous studies of Aegean figures depicted in Theban Eighteenth Dynasty tombs were used for occidental materializations of ‘Minoans’, and that those Egyptologists who pointed to associations of Keftiu with Syria did not pay too much attention to these images. Those, who did, however, continued materialising ‘Minoans’ as western. The problem in both cases is in the Orientalism of the disciplines. After analysing decorum in these representations it is better to call for a specific ‘cultural topography’ in order to explain why figures definitely coming from the Aegean world are associated with ‘north’ and ‘Asia’ in an Egyptian world view. Only cultural ‘topography’ can reconcile Minoan Crete as the homeland of the represented Aegean figures with the placement of Keftiu and twnAyw among places in ‘Asia’. If we move beyond our modern geographical definitions and order of things in the world, maybe we can grasp the otherness of past world views and diorientalize both Minoan archaeology and Egyptology.

The fact that images can be used to materialize profoundly different ‘Minoans’ (race, people, princes of a people, emissaries of a political unit in the eastern Mediterranean etc.) only adds to the idea that it is not reality entering an image, it was the image
which entered and shattered reality, symbolic coordinates which determine what we experience as reality (Žižek 2002:16). Images of foreigners in the Theban Eighteenth Dynasty tombs functioned as secondary agencies for sure. Whether or not Aegean figures are interpreted as princes or emissaries, and their objects as gifts or jnw, depends on who perceives them and the knowledge he possesses about the event represented. In the end, perceptions of these figures differed between those who attended the court ceremonies and had restricted knowledge about them, and those who did not (including archaeologists). This was precisely the intention of the privileged tomb owner, and it was achieved visually, via imagery.

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