

FELINE HUNTERS IN THE TELL EL-DAB^a PAINTINGS: ICONOGRAPHY AND DATING*

By Lyvia Morgan

The Hunt Frieze from Tell el-Dab^a was found in hundreds of pieces in a dump next to a ramp on the northeast side of Palace F.¹ Like the other two palaces in the complex, this building was made entirely of mudbrick, of which only the substructure has survived. The ramp would have led to an upper storey, which was presumably the site of the wall paintings.

Stratigraphic analysis of the deposits revealed an early 18th dynasty date, the pottery belonging to the Tuthmoside period.² The palatial complex may have been constructed during the the early Tuthmoside period or during the joint regency of Hatshepsut and Tuthmosos III. Significantly, the beginning of this time span falls shortly after the appearance of certain Aegean influences on Egyptian art – the flying gallop (on a dagger and gold collar from the tomb of Ahhotep) and an Aegean style griffin, with crest and wings, seen on the axe of Ahmose.³ In Aegean terms, Ahmose corresponds to the middle of Late Minoan I A, Tuthmosis I to the end of LM IA, beginning of LM IB (Table 1). BIETAK comments that there is no record of either Amenophis I or Tuthmosis I having been at Avaris,⁴ though that does not preclude the possibility. Tuthmosis II only reigned for a few years. The latest possible date for the paintings is the beginning of the joint reign of Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III, which corresponds to Late Minoan IB. Given the close contacts between

EGYPT 18 th Dynasty		AEGEAN Late Minoan/ Late Helladic	
Ahmose	1540–1515	LM IA/LH I	1580 ⁺ –1480 ⁺ / 1600–1500 ⁺
Amenophis I	1515–1494		
Tuthmosis I	1494–1482	LM IA– LH IIA	/1500 ⁺ –1440
Tuthmosis II	1482–1479	LM IB/LH IIA –LH IIB	1480 ⁺ –1425/
Hatshepsut	1479–1457		
Tuthmosis III	1479–1427		
Amenophis II	1427–1401	LM II/ LH II B	1425–1390/ 1440–1390
Tuthmosis IV	1401–1391	LM IIIA1/ LH IIIA1	1390–1360 ⁺ / 1390–1360 ⁺
Amenophis III	1391–1353		
Akhenaten	1353–1337	LM IIIA2/ LH IIIA2	1360 ⁺ –1330 ⁺ / 1360 ⁺ –1330 ⁺
Smenkhare	1338–1336		
Tutankhamun	1336–1327	LM IIIB/LH III	1330 ⁺ –1190/ 1330 ⁺ –1180 ⁺
Ay	1327–1319		
Horemheb	1319–1291		

Table 1 Comparative chronology
Aegean synchronisations with Egyptian kings represent the majority of the reign, not necessarily all of it. Dates are approximate, based on Kitchen for Egypt, and Warren and Hankey for the Aegean. Where there is a margin of plus or minus 10 years, the lower of the two has been given, followed by a +sign. All dates are BCE.

* I am grateful to Manfred Bietak and Peter Warren for their indispensable clarifications of issues of chronology, and to Manfred Bietak and Nanno Marinatos for their helpful comments on this paper.

¹ BIETAK 1994a, 1994b, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2000a, forthc.; BIETAK and MARINATOS 1995; BIETAK, MARINATOS and PALYVOU 2000, forthc.; BIETAK and PALYVOU 2000; MARINATOS 1996, 1998, 2000, forthc.; MORGAN 1995a, 1997, forthc.; POURSAT 1999; SHAW 1995. On technique: BRYSBAERT 2002, SEEBER 2000.

² BIETAK, DORNER and JÁNOSI 2001, 36–45; 31, fig. 2. Two occupation layers of the early 18th Dynasty precede the palatial complex, both with enclosure walls. Phase D1.2 had a small palatial structure with a hall, magazines, and courtyards with numerous silos (some renewed several times). Above this, Phase D1.1 had camp fires and

numerous burials of soldiers, with successive interments (tomb pits cut into other tomb pits). The palatial complex (Phase C3–2) was constructed over these layers, cutting into both. The fall of Avaris is assumed to have taken place between the 18th–23rd years of Ahmose. Allowing at least 20 years for each or the earlier two layers, the beginning of the palaces with the wall paintings (Phase C 3) would be in the last years of Tuthmosis I or in to Tuthmosis II or Hatshepsut / Tuthmosis III.

³ PM I, 550–551, 715; IV, 191; KANTOR 1947, 62–76; SMITH 1965 a, 125–126, pls. 84 b, 86; HELCK 1979 (56–60); SALEH and SOUROUZIAN 1987, nos. 121 and 122 (colour); MORGAN 1988, 53, pl. 63; JÁNOSI 1992; HANKEY 1993; WARREN 1995, 13.

⁴ BIETAK 2000 b, 190.

Egypt and the Aegean at this time, this is the period now favoured by Bietak. It is during the time of Hatshepsut – Tuthmosis III that the well-known depictions of Keftiu appear in Theban tombs.⁵ We also have the earliest instances of the flying gallop in Egyptian painting, shown fully developed in the tomb of Puimre (TT 39),⁶ and (a little later) the break-up of registers into more naturalistic terrain in the hunt scenes of the tombs of Rekhmire (TT 100) and Kenamun (TT 93).⁷ Had Egyptian palatial art of the Tuthmosid period survived, I am sure we would have seen further iconographic and idiomatic correspondences between Aegean and Egyptian art.

As an iconographer, my interest in chronology lies more in relative, than absolute, dating. Since the use of certain iconographic elements is often long lived, and the find circumstances far from precise (objects may be heirlooms, paintings fall from walls), locating a particular image within a sharply defined time scale can be a difficult, if not fruitless, task. In the context of a conference on chronology, therefore, the aims of this paper are to situate the Hunt Frieze, and specifically the feline predators, within the framework of Aegean and Egyptian iconography.

While focusing on the Hunt Frieze, it is important to keep in mind that the fragments were found together with those of the Bull Frieze, which is of the same relative scale and shares facets of landscape.⁸ Clearly they belonged to the same iconographic programme. Bull sports – in which young men and boys display their courage, agility and skill against the dangerously equipped bull – offer a direct analogy to the hunting of wild animals. In Middle Kingdom tomb paintings, scenes of capturing bulls (for sacrificial slaughter) are juxtaposed with wrestling between men, and hunting wild animals.⁹ In Aegean art, we see

the symbolic parallel between man and animal in the Boxers and Antelopes painting from Thera and the stone Sports Rhyton from Ayia Triada, where bull leaping is sandwiched between boxing and wrestling.¹⁰

Hunting is, of course, a recurrent theme of Minoan glyptic art, but it is less familiar within Aegean painting before the Mycenaean age (when it is human, rather than feline hunting).

In the Theran miniatures, the Hunt Frieze forms an interval between the scenes of human (largely male) activity.¹¹ The feline (identified as either serval or leopard) chases birds, while a griffin chases a deer. In the adjacent Ship Procession frieze, a lion chases deer. In neither scene is there any human presence – no hunters, no dogs.

These three feline predators – lion, leopard and griffin – are all part of the Tell el-Dabca frieze. Publication of the felines will constitute the first of the fascicules on the Hunt Frieze, with Nanno Marinatos presenting the lions, myself the leopards and the griffin. Judging by the large amount of surviving material, the hunt was probably painted over two (or even three) walls. Nanno Marinatos has identified at least ten lions. Larger than the leopards, they bound in characteristic flying gallop, most to the left, one or two to the right. Two attack a bull. Astonishingly (since the animal is rare in art), there are at least six leopards in the frieze. All but one move to the left. Besides the felines, there are also human hunters with dogs, as well as goats, antelope, deer and bull as prey. These are still being studied.¹²

Like the Bull Frieze, the background is red above and yellow below with a wavy division which, here in the hunt, is indicative of a river. In parts, the ground colours are divided by a rocky terrain with small pebbles. At the base of the

⁵ VERCOUTTER 1956; WACHSMANN 1987; HELCK 1995; MATTHÄUS 1995; REHAK 1996, 1998; PANAGIOTOPOULOS 2001; PINCH-BROCK 2000.

⁶ DAVIES 1922–23, 45–48, pls. VII, VIII.1 On changes in animal movements and landscape in early 18th dynasty painting see KANTOR 1947, 62–76; SMITH 1965 b, 152ff; GROENEWEGEN-FRANKFORT 1978, 83ff.

⁷ Rekhmire: DAVIES 1943, vol. II, pl. xliii, cf. xlvii (1) and vol. I, 40–41; Kenamun: DAVIES 1930, vol. I, pl. XLVIII, p.37, and vol. II, pl. XLVIII A. A unique earlier instance of a landscape with wavy divisions in place of the usual registers occurs in the MK tomb of Senbi at Meir (fig. 8). In the tomb of Ukh-hotp, Senbi's son, (BLACKMAN 1915,

pls. VIII, XXXI–XXXIII), landscape is dispensed with altogether, but clearly the tomb decoration was hastily executed and unfinished (BLACKMAN 1915, 10–11, 15, 19–20). Cf. GROENEWEGEN-FRANKFORT 1978, 70–73, figs. 11–12.

⁸ Publication of the Bulls Frieze by M. BIETAK, N. MARINATOS and C. PALLYVOU is forthcoming.

⁹ MORGAN 1997, 22–25.

¹⁰ MORGAN 1995b, 180–184; 1997, 18–22, pls. 5–6.

¹¹ MARINATOS 1974; DOUMAS 1992, pls. 30–34; MORGAN 1988, esp. 146–150, pls. 4–7, 51–2, 60, 181.

¹² The hunters and dogs are being studied by Nanno Marinatos and the prey by myself. On a scene with a dog attacking goats see MARINATOS forthc.



Fig. 1 Griffin from Tell el-Dab^ca, detail (Reconstruction: L. Morgan, Computer artwork: M. Negrete-Martinez)



Fig. 2 Sealing from Zakros, LM I (after *CMS* II.7, 96)



Fig. 3 Wooden lid found at Saqqara. Mycenaean, LH II–III A (after KANTOR 1947, pl. 24A)

frieze are large areas of mainly blue rock. Red backgrounds are characteristic of the earliest Minoan wall paintings, as in the Saffron Gatherer from Knossos palace (Middle Minoan III).¹³ The closest parallel to this particular landscape, with red and light ground divided along irregular paths of plants, is offered by the House of the Frescoes at Knossos, the dating of which is Middle Minoan III B / Late Minoan I A.¹⁴

The single griffin has the characteristic Aegean features of a crest, running spirals and wings (Fig. 1). It appears on a yellow ochre ground. In Aegean art, the griffin is a familiar predator. It appears, attacking its prey, on several sealstones (Fig. 2); on Mycenaean ivories, and, in the single example from another wall painting, in the Theran Miniature Frieze.¹⁵ The earliest griffins appear on MM II sealings,¹⁶ but their popularity rises sharply during the Late Bronze I period, especially on LM I A sealings of Ayia Triada, Zakros and Knossos.¹⁷ Both the hunting theme and the association between griffins and lions begin in Late Minoan I A, on seals and in the Theran wall painting, and continue on Mycenaean ivories.

The ivories are Late Helladic III, but one of the earliest (LH IIB), a pyxis with lid from the Athens Agora, has a griffin which affords a strong parallel with the one from Tell el-Dab^ca, with spirals on the crest as well as the wing, attacking its prey in flying gallop.¹⁸ Another interesting comparison appears on a wooden pyxis lid (Fig. 3),¹⁹ contemporary with the Athenian pyxis, and significantly found in Egypt, at Saqqara (reminding us of the role of portable art as disseminators of

¹³ EVELY 1999, 121, 236–238 (CAMERON); IMMERWAHR 1990, 170 (bibliography); HOOD forthc. (chronology). Attributed dates have ranged from MM II B (Evans) through MM IIIB / LM IA (Immerwahr) to LM II–III A (Cameron). Hood convincingly assigns it to MM III A.

¹⁴ CAMERON 1967; 1968; EVELY 1999, 246–247 (Cameron reconstruction); IMMERWAHR 1990, 170 (bibliography); HOOD forthc. (dating).

¹⁵ MORGAN 1988, 49–54.

¹⁶ Mallia: *CMS* II.6, 215; Phaistos: *CMS* II.5, 317–319.

¹⁷ Ayia Triada: *CMS* II.6, 99–103; Zakros: *CMS* II.7, 87, 89–98, 163. Knossos: *CMS* II.8 (1), 182–194 (mostly LM I); (2) 359–360.

¹⁸ MORGAN 1988, pls. 67–68; The prey of the Tell el Dab^ca griffin has not been reconstructed at this stage. However, the colour below the beak of the griffin suggests that it may have caught a deer.

¹⁹ KANTOR 1947, pl. 24A; MORGAN 1988, 52, fig. 41.



Fig. 4 Leopard from Tell el-Dab'ca (reconstruction: L. Morgan and M. Negrete-Martinez)

visual ideas). Lion and griffin stalk their prey, as parallel predators (as in the Frieze, with felines and griffin). Strikingly, the unusual trefoil plant behind the lion is identical to the plant behind one of the Tell el-Dab'ca leopards.²⁰

The lions in the frieze are almost all in characteristic flying gallop, and are associated with rocky landscape and riverine land with reeds. Lions are a surprisingly common theme in Aegean art, with a particular concentration in the Shaft Graves of the warrior aristocracy of Mycenae.²¹ The animal appears in isolation on seal stones from the Early Minoan period on, but at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age they appear, with great frequency, actively attacking their prey – bull, deer or goat. The earliest known example of this theme is perhaps a plaster relief from the east side of the palace of Knossos, usually dated to MM III.²² As in the Frieze, lions are associated with rocky landscape, reeds, and palms. It is sometimes argued that

lions were a 'nuisance', attacking domestic livestock, but their prey in Aegean iconography is invariably wild, and the same prey as that of man the hunter. Here, uniquely in Aegean painting, lions are presented in the full context of the hunt. We see the predators, the hunters, and the prey. There is no evidence in the painting for any attack on any of the lions by the hunters or their dogs.

All the leopards are on a red ground (Fig. 4). Distinctive white spots irregularly outlined in black depict the characteristic 'rosettes'. The animals are, on the whole, well observed. Some pounce down from the upper zone of the painting (one fragment includes the flat upper edge, where the plaster abutted the wooden frame), others prowl along the ground in the lower zone (one paw touches the lower edge). The pouncing animals kick their hind legs up, body directed downwards to the ground. These movements – pounce and prowl – are characteristic of leopards. Whereas

²⁰ A new reconstruction by the author will appear in our forthcoming volume on the felines. Preliminary publication: BIETAK 1995, pl. 4.2; 1996, pl. VIIIA; MARINATOS 1998, fig. 11 (right).

²¹ The Tell el-Dab'ca lions are being presented by Nanno Marinatos. On lions in Aegean art see: PINI 1985; MOR-

GAN 1988, 44–49; 1995, 172–180; MARINATOS 1990; BLOEDOW 1992; 1999.

²² EVANS, *PoM* II, 333–4, fig. 188; EVANS, *PoM* IV, 538, fig. 489. The fragment is discussed as a hunting scene by Nanno Marinatos in our forthcoming publication on the felines.

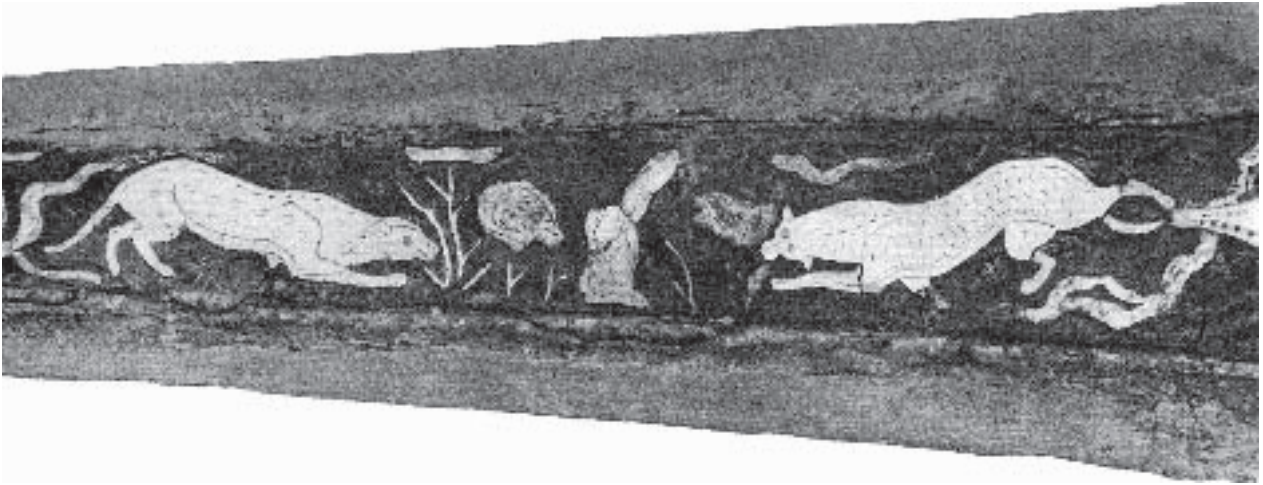


Fig. 5 Inlaid dagger from Rutsi, LH I-II A (after MARINATOS & HIRMER 1960, pl. 171)

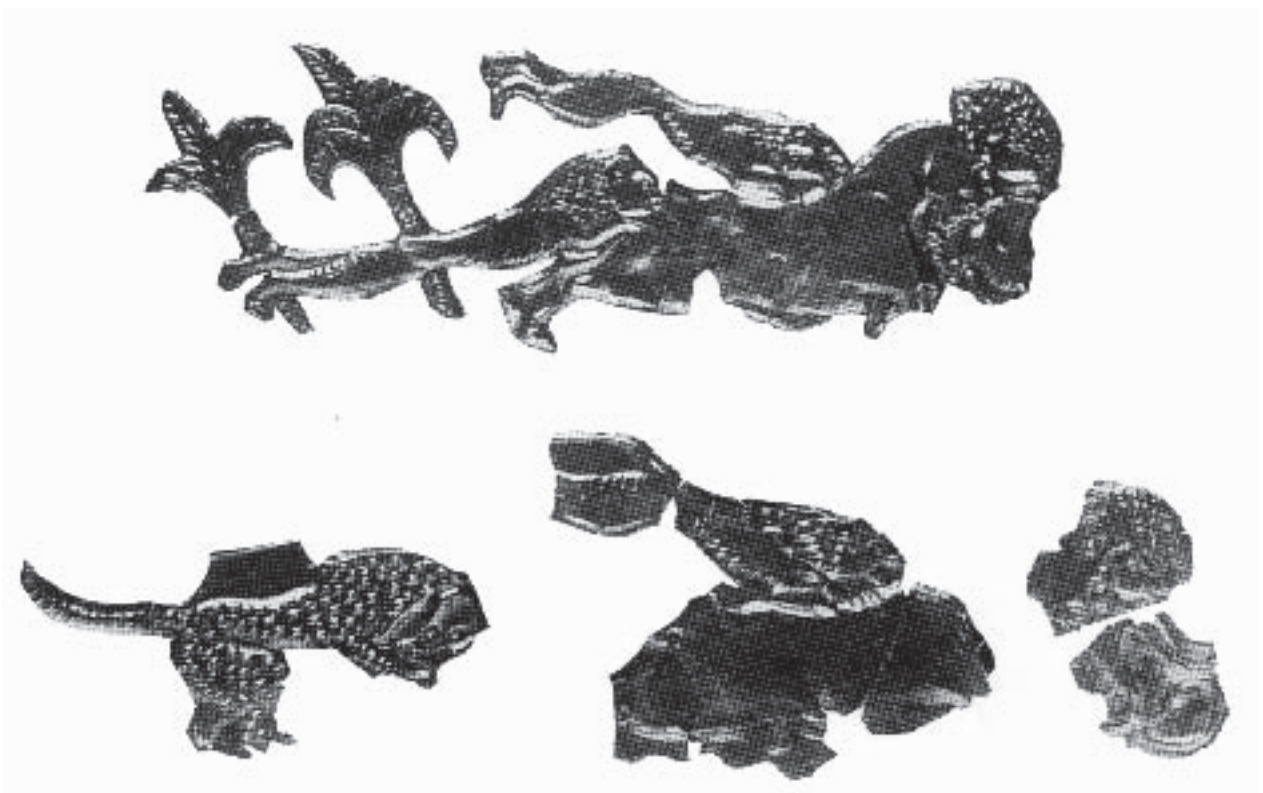


Fig. 6 Gold inlays from Shaft Grave III, Mycenae, LH I (after MORGAN 1988, pl. 58)

lionesses run after their fleeing prey, leopards stalk them, prowling with head low until they pounce, before the prey has time to realize and escape.

Leopards in Aegean art are rare, but judging from a fragment from Knossos²³ and, arguably, the Theran frieze, it was occasionally a mural

²³ EVANS, *PoMI*, 540, fig. 392b (Gilliéron reconstruction); EVELY 1999, 219, CAMERON reconstruction. It was found

in the North Threshing Floor dump, therefore without datable context.



Fig. 7 Hunt scene, tomb of Ptahhotep, Saqqara, 5th dyn. (after DAVIES 1900, pl. XXII)

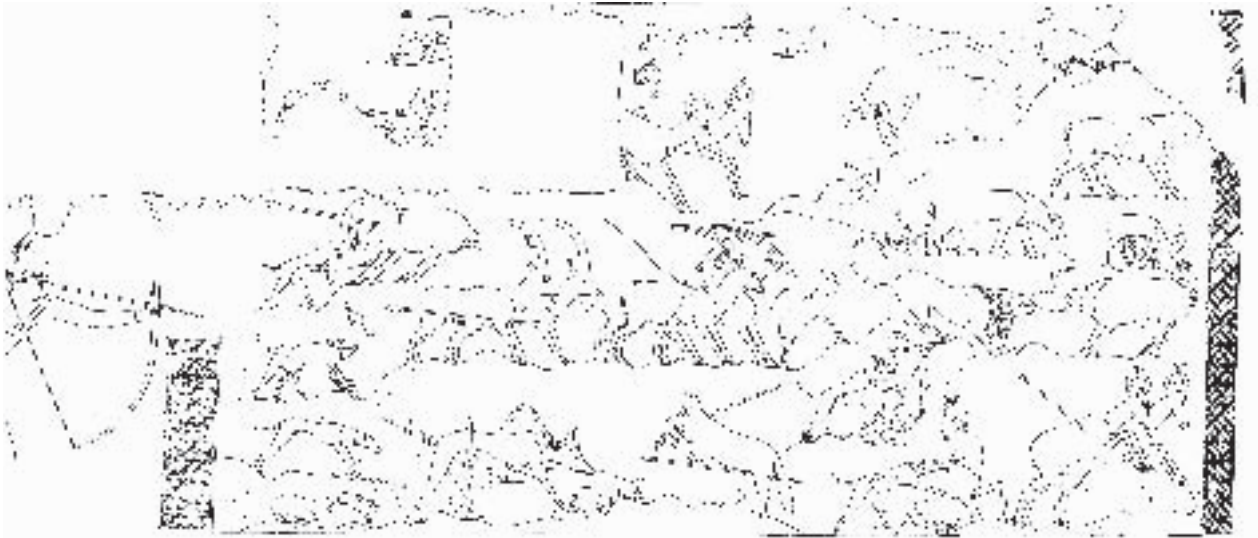


Fig. 8 Hunt scene, tomb of Senbi, Meir, 12th dyn. (after BLACKMAN 1914, pl. VI, detail)

theme. The closest in character are the leopards on an inlaid dagger blade from Rutsi, near Pylos, dated to Late Helladic I–II A (equivalent to LM IA–LM IB) (Fig. 5).²⁴ With lowered head, hind parts higher than the creeping fore legs, two of the felines capture the essence of the leopard's hunting tactics. No prey is visible and the leopards stalk towards one another, as they may have done in the painting, where they face both left and right.

The only other known instances of lions and leopards together in Aegean art are from the Shaft Graves at Mycenae (Late Helladic I). Uniquely, a gold pommel from Shaft Grave IV is embossed with a lion attacking a leopard.²⁵ But on

gold inlays from Shaft Grave III (Fig. 6)²⁶ the animals hunt their prey alongside one another, amidst a significant landscape of palms (which are also present in the Tell el-Dab^ca Bull Frieze). The felines occupy separate inlays and were probably on different sides of a wooden box. Similarly in the Tell el-Dab^ca Hunt Frieze, there is no indication that lions and leopards co-existed exactly in the same part of the painting, though they must have been close.

There is no surviving Aegean evidence outside Tell el-Dab^ca for dogs, lions and leopards combined in a hunting scene, nor for human hunters associated with these three predators. This combination – man + dog, lion, leopard,

²⁴ MARINATOS and HIRMER 1960, pls. XXXVIII (centre), 171.

²⁵ KARO 1930/33, no. 295, pls. LXXV–LXXVI, LXXVIII; HOOD 1978, 177, pl. 174.

²⁶ KARO 1930/33, nos. 119, 120, pl. XXXIII; MORGAN 1988, 58.

ungulates within a hunt – is characteristic of Egyptian art. But the manner of portrayal in the Tell el-Dab^ca painting is entirely Aegean. The unique inclusion of so many leopards expands on an element which, to Aegean artists, would have seemed particularly appropriate to Egypt (or the Near East). Iconographically, lions were popular throughout the ancient world but leopards were rare. Lions were occasionally seen in Greece, but not leopards. The Aegean artists took a theme familiar to both cultures – the hunt – adding emphasis to both the ‘international’ lion and the more elusive, ‘local’ leopard, an emphasis which compliments the animal theme in the neighbouring Bull Frieze.

There are, of course, more examples of leopards in Egypt but again, not many. In New Kingdom tombs, the leopard appears occasionally in tribute scenes but is absent from mural depictions of the desert hunt. As part of a hunting scene on a wall, the leopard occurs in only a handful of tombs from the Old and especially Middle Kingdom. Significantly, lions in Egyptian hunt scenes also appear between the 6th–12th dynasties, predominantly in the Middle Kingdom.²⁷ The leopard invariably appears on its own or with its mate, seemingly oblivious to the carnage of the attacking dogs and lions. In the 5th

dynasty tomb of Ptahhotep at Saqqara (Fig. 7) and (less well preserved) the 12th dynasty tomb of Senbi at Meir (Fig. 8), two leopards mate, as dogs attack ungulates and the lion pits his strength against that of the bull.²⁸ This combination is significant in terms of the Tell el-Dab^ca paintings.

In Egypt there were two types of hunt: the hunting of herbivores for food and the ritual hunting of wild bulls and lions, a symbolic challenge against the visible manifestations of powerful dangerous forces. In scenes such as these, man hunts herbivores but the presence of bull and lion as antagonistic forces brings into play the second, ritual element.

As well as the feline predators, there are hunters and dogs in the Hunt Frieze. Dogs attacking ungulates is a theme known from sealstones from Middle Minoan II on (Figs. 9–10).²⁹ Sometimes the dog accompanies a hunter. In the Hunt Frieze, a trained hound (with collar) runs in flying gallop to attack two goats.³⁰ The only other Aegean wall painting prior to the Mycenaean palace period which shows dogs, is the miniature Hunt Frieze from the NE Bastion at Kea (probably Late Cycladic II/Late Minoan IB).³¹ In both paintings the dog springs forward in flying gallop to bite the underbelly of the animal. Both of these features



Fig. 9 Minoan bead-seal MM II
(after *CMS* VII, 35)



Fig. 10 Sealing from Knossos, MM III–LM I
(after *CMS* II.8, 353)

²⁷ On Egyptian hunt scenes: VANDIER 1964, Ch. X, 787–833; DECKER and HERB 1994, Ch. IV, 265–352.

²⁸ Ptahhotep: DAVIES 1900, I, pls. XXI–XXII, XXV–XXVI. Senbi: BLACKMAN 1914, I, pls. VI, VIII.

²⁹ MM II examples: *CMS* II.5, 258, 259, 284; *CMS* VII, 35.

³⁰ MARINATOS forthc.

³¹ MORGAN 1998, fig. 7; EAD. forthc.



Fig. 11 Gold foil chariot attachment from the tomb of Tutankhamun (Egyptian Museum, Cairo Photo: Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford)

are specifically Aegean. In Egyptian hunt scenes of the Old and Middle Kingdom (Figs. 7–8), the dogs attack at the neck or throat and either stand firmly on the ground or mount the body of the defeated prey. Even following the introduction of the flying gallop motif to Egypt, dogs in wall paintings of the early 18th dynasty mostly attack throats or legs rather than bellies (Fig. 15). In the Kea painting the narrative is sequential: the prey is attacked, a hunter carries it home and brings it to the cooks. At Thera the hunt is devoid of human intervention and, therefore, has no dogs. Only at Tell el-Dab^{ca} are there human hunters directly associated with the hunt. These are being worked on by Nanno Marinatos. There are several hunters, each with a dog. Like the lions and leopards, they moved in both directions, closing in on their prey, all of whom appear to move from right to left. Here – as in Egyptian paintings and reliefs – man the hunter is an active participant (even if the human hunters were in a different part of the frieze from the felines, as we suspect).



Fig. 12 Gold dagger hilt from the tomb of Tutankhamun (British Museum 1972, No. 36, far right)

In ancient, as in traditional, societies, the significance of the hunt invariably had a strong symbolic component. In iconographic terms, empathy and symbolic appropriation of power is evident, especially, on the lion hunt dagger from Shaft Grave IV at Mycenae.³² On this ceremonial weapon, an analogy is drawn between lion attack-

³² MARINATOS and HIRMER 1960, pls. XXXV (centre), XXXVI; MORGAN 1988, 47–48, fig. 34; 1995 b, 173–175.



Fig. 13 Cone-shaped clay seal from Chryso-lakkos, Mallia, MM II (after *CMS* II.1, 419)



Fig. 14 Sealing from Ayia Triada, LM I (after *CMS* II.6, 70)

ing deer and men attacking lion. In Egyptian iconography hunting is not seen as a method of controlling nature but an incorporation of its powers. In the tomb of Ptahhotep, hunting and animal capture (including lion and leopard) are juxtaposed with young boys wrestling and playing a game of captors and captive. Similarly, Middle Kingdom scenes juxtapose hunting with scenes of bull-catching (for sacrifice) and combat sports (note 9). It is in the light of these symbolic associations that we should look at the paintings of Tell el-Dab^ca, for the friezes surely belonged to a unified programme, with bull-catching, bull-leaping and hunting as parallel activities. Bull sports and the hunt are associated as male tests of courage and strength, attributes which, in turn, are paralleled with the hunting prowess of felines.

Such ideas were current in Egypt through the Old and Middle Kingdom, from the 5th to the

12th dynasties, when they permeate the tomb iconography of noblemen and local chiefs. Bull capturing, bull fights, the hunt, acrobatics, all occur in Old and Middle Kingdom tombs. In the Aegean, though bull leaping is relatively late in

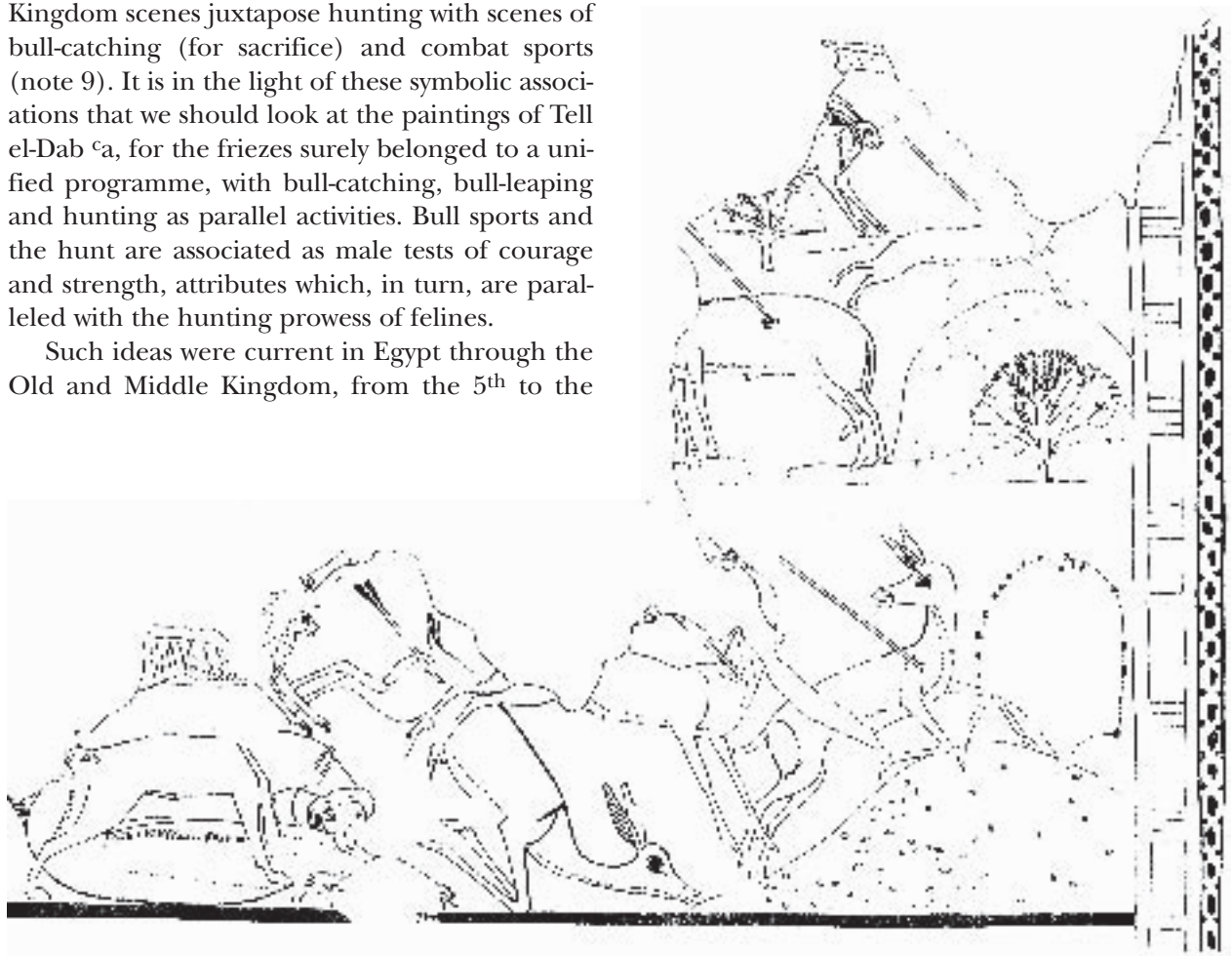


Fig. 15 Hunt scene, tomb of User, Thebes, Tuthmosis I (–early Hatshepsut), (after DAVIES 1913, pl. XXII, detail)

painting (Late Bronze II), it appears sculpted on to vessels dating back to EM III–MM IA, occurs on sealings and the Ayia Triada Sports Rhyton from MM III–LM IA, and, between the two periods, on Syrian seals.³³ Ideas are therefore early.

However, the idiom of the paintings is in line with Late Minoan / early New Kingdom. Flying gallop and Aegean-style griffins, while evident in the Aegean long before, appear in Egypt (with rare exceptions) only with the onset of the New Kingdom.³⁴ The landscape is akin to the House of the Frescoes on Crete, to Kea and to Thera – all LM I – and presages changes in Tuthmosid hunt scenes in Egypt. These changes in Egyptian art suggest direct Aegean influence through the Tell el-Dab^ca paintings. Such changes were presumably to be seen in (now lost) early New Kingdom palatial murals.

Lions and leopards appear in hunt scenes in Egyptian tomb paintings and reliefs in the Old and Middle Kingdom, not afterwards. In the Aegean, both lions and griffins appear as hunters on sealstones datable to the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. Leopards are rare, and, as hunters, cluster in Late Bronze I. Lions and leopards together are restricted to the Mycenae Shaft Graves (LH I). Lions, a griffin, and a large cat (serval or leopard) all hunt their prey in the Miniature Frieze from Thera (LC I / LM IA).

One could argue that in Egypt, felines as hunters become obsolete in the New Kingdom, making the presence of such iconography by Aegean artists in Egypt at this time somewhat of a curiosity. However, there are anomalies that lead us to royal iconography. While hunting as a funerary mural theme is non-royal and would have been inappropriate on the walls of a king's tomb, palatial art and portable objects are a different matter. A hunt scene with a lion and perhaps

leopard is known to have decorated the Throne Room of Amenophis III's palace at Malkata.³⁵ Clearly, in the intervening time since Tell el-Dab^ca, we are missing some vital links.

This becomes even more evident when we consider the tomb of Tutankhamun, which had a significant number of portable objects with iconography of the feline hunt.

On the famous painted box we see the king's appropriation of feline power in conquering human foes.³⁶ Warfare and hunting are directly paralleled on sides and lid, and on the ends the king is depicted as a sphinx (lion-man) trampling his enemies.

Large felines play a protective role in Egyptian royal iconography and presage royal authority. Unusually, a gold foil chariot attachment shows a winged griffin and a dog attacking an antelope (Fig. 11).³⁷ The dog – in Aegean idiom – attacks the belly of the animal. Equally significantly, the funerary equipment of Tutankhamun is unique in including three scenes of a leopard attacking its prey, recalling the gold inlays from Shaft Grave III at Mycenae, where lions and a leopard hunt their prey amidst palm trees (Fig. 6).

The ivory veneered box juxtaposes scenes of the king with scenes of hunting by royal dogs, lions and a leopard.³⁸ On four gold buckles from a harness the power of the lion and leopard as hunters is paralleled with that of the king as warrior.³⁹ A gold dagger, found face down on the abdomen of the king's mummified body, has the king's cartouche on the pommel and a hunt down the sheath, with scenes of a dog and a lion attacking their prey, and a lion (below) and leopard (above) together attacking an ibex (Fig. 12).⁴⁰

The question arises as to why lions and leopards disappear from hunt scenes in the mural schemes of private tombs during the New King-

³³ MORGAN 1995 a, 40. Syria: COLLON, 1994; 2000, 284–285.

³⁴ See note 3. There are isolated instances of the flying gallop in Egypt prior to the early New Kingdom: a plate from a tomb of Qubbet el-Hawa at Aswan, dated to the end of the Old Kingdom (DECKER and HERB 1994, pl. CXLII, J 49); a painting in a chapel at Mo^calla of the 1st Intermediate Period (SMITH 1965 b, fig. 190b); an ivory inlay from Kerma of the 12th–13th Dynasty (SMITH 1965 a, pl. 82 B; 1995b, pl. 190a. The flying gallop is also part of the repertoire of Syrian cylinder seals (COLLON 2000).

³⁵ NICOLAKAKI-KENTROU 2000. See also the galloping calf from the harem suite, SMITH 1965a, pl. 122B.

³⁶ CARTER and MACE 1923, vol. 1, 110–111, pls. XXI and L–LIV; 1927, vol. II, 17–18, pl. III; DAVIES and GARDINER 1962; PORTER and MOSS 1964, Part 2, 577–8; SCHULZ 2000.

³⁷ FELDMAN 2002, fig. 23, right.

³⁸ CARTER and MACE vol. III, 118–119, frontispiece; British Museum 1972, no. 21.

³⁹ CARTER and MACE vol. I, pl. LXVII (two buckles; four are on display in the Cairo Museum.)

⁴⁰ CARTER and MACE vol. II, 132–133, pls. LXXXVII–LXXXVIII. British Museum 1972, no. 36; REEVES 1990, 177.

dom. The answer, I believe, is that, by this time, both animals had been well and truly appropriated by royal iconography. It was no longer fitting to show lions and leopards as hunting predators in non-royal contexts. The same was true of bull-catching, which, in the New Kingdom, became a theme of royal temple iconography.

What does this say of the Tell el-Dab^ca scenes of bull-leaping and hunting with lions, leopards and dogs as the predators and how does the situation compare with that of the Aegean? Bull-leaping in the Aegean appears to have been a royal theme. Although it is a repeated theme of sealstones, in wall paintings it occurs only in palaces and is especially associated with Knossos. Lions and leopards together appear only in the context of the warrior aristocracy, or chiefs, of the Mycenae Shaft Graves. As on the objects from the tomb of Tutankhamun, scenes of their hunting prowess adorn weapons or are associated with the warfare of rulers. At Tell el-Dab^ca, the Hunt and Bull-Leaping Friezes, although found in a dump, evidently adorned the adjacent palatial building (Palace F). Within the context of both Aegean and Egyptian iconography, the theme of the Feline Hunt should reflect both leadership and dominance. It glorifies youthful, masculine prowess.

While the traditions on which the ideas were built are clearly long-lived, an early Tuthmoside date for the paintings is wholly in keeping with the comparative iconography from both Egypt and the Aegean. Given the stratigraphic limits of

Tuthmosis I – early Hatshepsut / Tuthmosis III, a close study of Egyptian hunt scenes of the early 18th Dynasty is revealing. The animals in the earliest of these tombs – Hray (TT 12) and Ineni (TT 81) – retain typical Egyptian movements, hind legs on the ground.⁴¹ It is in the tomb of User (TT 21) that we see significant morphological changes (Fig. 15).⁴² A (slightly stiff) version of the flying gallop now makes its appearance, a gazelle collapses on to its forelegs and a hound is depicted in frontal face. All these features of animal movement are characteristically Aegean (Figs. 13–14)⁴³ and occur in Egyptian wall painting for the first time in this tomb. User held a senior position at the court of Tuthmosis I, but the king appears to have been dead by the time the tomb was completed. The painting therefore dates, at earliest, towards the end of Tuthmosis I, at latest, to early Hatshepsut.⁴⁴ As we saw, by the time of Tuthmosis III, the flying gallop appears fully developed in hunt scenes. It would seem that the Tomb of User marks a moment of Aegean impact on Egyptian wall painting. While the source cannot be clearly established, the Tell el-Dab^ca Hunt Frieze must be a firm contender. In the later tomb paintings of the time of Tuthmosis III, the palace murals of Malkata and Amarna and, above all, the remarkable hunt scenes on objects from the tomb of Tutankhamun, we witness the aftermath of the impact on Egyptian art, made (we assume) by itinerant Aegean artists such as those at Tell el-Dab^ca.

⁴¹ DECKER and HERB 1994, J 88, pl. CLVI (Hray); J 90, pl. CLVIII (Ineni). The tomb of Hray dates to Ahmose–Amenophis I (PM I/2, 24). The range of dates for the Tomb of Ineni is Amenophis I– Tuthmosis III (PM I/2, 159), but the animal movements should place it before the end of Tuthmosis I.

⁴² DAVIES 1913, pl. XXII.

⁴³ On frontal face in Aegean art, see MORGAN 1995 c. In Aegean art, it is the lion (Fig. 13) or bull, rather than the dog, that is shown frontal face. Frontal face is also a feature of Near Eastern art, applied in particular to rampant predatory lions.

⁴⁴ DAVIES 1913, 27.

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