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MINOAN-ANATOLIAN RELATIONS AND
THE AHHIYAWA QUESTION:
A RE-ASSESSMENT OF THE EVIDENCE

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A new approach to the question of Minoan-Anatolian relations through the re-evaluation of the existing archaeological and textual evidence and an alternative suggestion concerning the origin of the first Ahhiyawa people from Crete are presented in this paper. More specifically, the agents of Minoan culture were, especially during the Neopalatial period, active participants in important commercial and cultural networks that had been developed between the Aegean world and various regions of the eastern Mediterranean. They had established their cultural influence in the eastern Aegean, whereas traces of their presence can also be identified in some sites in the coastal zone of western Anatolia. Some aspects of their activities were evidently recorded by the Egyptians and Syrians and, as I suggest, they can all be argued to appear in the Hittite archives of the second half of the 15th century BC under the name of 'Ahhiyawa', a name that was given by the Hittites to the inhabitants of the Aegean region in general. Intense commercial enterprises and cultural exchanges took place during this period, whilst possible military ventures and interference by the Minoans in the western Anatolian-Hittite conflict cannot be ruled out. This was probably one of the last resurgences of Minoan power as a political entity before the Mycenaeans took over dominance in the Aegean.

Introduction

The issue of Minoan-Anatolian relationship has been so far focused on interaction in the coastal zone of the south-west part of Anatolia. In most cases, systematic research into Aegean-Anatolian contacts during the Late Bronze Age has taken the so-called 'Ahhiyawa Question' as its starting point. In 1924 Forrer suggested that the word Ahhiyawa of the Hittite texts corresponds to the Greek word *Ἀχαιῶν/Achaia*, the term by which the Greeks are referred to in Homer's epics (Forrer 1924; Bryce 1989a, 297). Since then the Ahhiyawa question has been a topic of controversy not only because of debates over the identification of the Ahhiyawa with the Homeric Greeks, but also over the location and extent of this

	<i>Crete</i>	<i>Mainland Greece</i>	<i>Hatti</i>
1450/1425 B.C.	LM II	LH IIB	Tudhaliya I/II <i>ca.</i> 1450/1420-1420/1400
1400/1390 B.C.	LM IIIA1	LH IIIA1	Arnuwanda I <i>ca.</i> 1420/1400-1400/1380
1375/1370 B.C.	LM IIIA2	LH IIIA2	

Table 1. Comparative chronologies of Crete, mainland Greece, and the Hittite kingdom, *ca.* 1450-1375 BC (low chronology).

kingdom for which various locations in Greece and Asia Minor have been proposed¹.

The equation of Ahhiyawa = Mycenaean has now been adopted by the majority of scholars². Like many scholars, the author of this article too is convinced that the people and country mentioned in the Hittite texts as ‘Ahhiyawa’ were located somewhere in Mycenaean Greece during the later phases of the Late Bronze Age. It is also an undeniable fact that the vast majority of researchers who have engaged in the discussion of the Ahhiyawa Question have so far focused their attention mainly on Mycenaean ‘perspectives’ of the problem.

In contrast to such approaches, the author is inclined to believe that the Hittites initially used the term ‘Ahhiyawa’ to describe the bearers not of Mycenaean culture, but of Minoan. To support this theory, evidence will be cited that goes back to the Middle Bronze Age and demonstrates a higher level of contact than might previously have been recognised between Minoan Crete and Anatolian cultures, including that of the Hittites. The primary aim is to present archaeological data in support of this argument. However, although I am aware of the fact that linguistics are not as central to this argument as archaeology, an alternative interpretation of the word ‘Ahhiyawa’ – a fundamental term to the researchers who have a special interest in that period – that underpins the above idea, and is consistent with the new interpretation offered here, will also be suggested.

Before outlining the arguments, it is necessary to provide a chronological context for the period being examined, that of the appearance of Ahhiyawa in the Hittite archives. The absolute chronology of this period (see Table 1) is still an object of

¹ Mycenae, Rhodes, Miletos, Cilicia, Caria, the islands of south-eastern Aegean, the coastal zone of western Anatolia, Crete, the broader area of Troy, Thrace, and southern Anatolia are possible locations of Ahhiyawa that have been proposed so far by various scholars (Mountjoy 1998, 49-51; Niemeier 1998, 19-25).

² For an extensive list of the academics who support the aforementioned equation see Niemeier 1998, 20-21, fig. 3.

much scholarly and scientific discussion and remains to be precisely defined, and for this reason all dates given here are approximate. The fundamental problem remains that there are dating issues on both sides of the debate – there is no certainty of either the dates of the individual Hittite kings, which would provide a chronology for their reigns and the events in the Hittite state archives of Hattusa, or of a more general chronology for the Aegean³.

Anatolian objects in Crete

To begin with, the Anatolian objects in Crete⁴, consist of a small wingless *sphinx* from Ayia Triadha dating to Middle Minoan period (MM) III – Late Minoan period (LM) IA (Cline 1991, 133-134), a similar *sphinx* of the same date from Tyllissos (Cline 1991, 137), an axe in the form of a leopard from Mallia dating with some uncertainty to the MM period (Davis 1977, 85), and five obsidian items from the same site that have been shown to be sourced from East Göllü Dağ, in central Anatolia (Carter/Kilikoglou 2007, 117, 126-128). Additionally, some obsidian blades from the Vat Room Deposit (MM IB context) at Knossos come also from Göllü Dağ (Panagiotaki 1998, 180). It is also noteworthy that according to a recent study 42% of the copper at Mallia came from Anatolia (Poursat/Loubet 2005, 120). Furthermore, the fragments of a reddish-brown burnished class of pottery known from Kommos, that dates from LM II to LM IIIB, suggest a southwestern Anatolian origin (Rutter 2006).

Some other objects that have been found in secure contexts in Crete equate to the MM III – LM I and may have been the products of Minoan workshops, but an Anatolian or Near Eastern origin cannot be ruled out. These include cylinder seals from Mavrospeleio and Tyllissos, and some steatite fragments that are suggested to have come from the curled locks of a large composite head of a sphinx, found at Knossos (Cline 1991, 138).

A silver lobed *kantharos* from Gournia, found in a context that is dated to MM I (Davis 1977, 87-90), and a similar object that was found in a Minoan shipwreck off the small island of Pseira (Chatzidaki/Betancourt 2006, 35-36) reveal a possible relationship between Minoan metalwork and central Anatolian forms. Additionally, a group of Middle Minoan sealings from Phaistos display remarkable stylistic affinities to sealings from Karahöyük in central Anatolia (Aruz 1993). This connection implies not only stylistic/cultural interactions but also the possible adoption of administrative and political systems. Furthermore, a group of ‘Anatolianising’ vessels that reproduced Anatolian shapes was found on the Isle of Christ, near Mallia (Davis 1977, 89).

In this context it is also worthwhile to make comparisons with Beycesultan (Lloyd/Mellaart 1965, 18, 33, 62), where the similarities in architecture and in size between the Minoan palaces and the so-called ‘Burnt Palace’ of that site are

³ The high Aegean Chronology is based mostly on radiocarbon dates, while the traditional low Aegean chronology is based on imports from Egypt.

⁴ For further information on these objects see Georgakopoulos 2009, 90-94; 2012a.

still far from being an undeniable fact that connects the two cultures; however, this must be kept in mind as a possible indirect influence.

Minoan presence in Anatolia

The cases of Miletos and Iasos and the possibility of Minoan influence on them have already been extensively discussed⁵. Minoan pottery has also been discovered at various sites along the western Anatolian coast (Georgakopoulos 2009, 80-88). It is also important to note the Minoan(ising) objects that have been found in the region. These include the double axe from Ephesos (Bammer/Muss 1996, 27), the female figurines from Izmir and the Troad (Niemeier 2005b, 200; Guzowska 2002, 590), the Minoan influence on the pottery of Seytan Deresi shipwreck (Margariti 1998), and probably the Aegean swords from Hattusa and Kastamonu and the 'Aegean' warrior on the bowl from Hattusa (see further discussion below). A possible Minoan influence for the bull-leaping scene on the vessel from Hüseyindede has also been mooted (Taracha 2002, 9-10; Georgakopoulos 2012b). Is it possible to claim that the Minoans exerted any form of cultural influence over the neighbouring indigenous population of Anatolia? A look at the map reveals that the Minoan presence in western Anatolia seems to have been focused only in certain selected coastal areas, without any penetration of the interior, as can be concluded from examining the archaeological material. Why did the Minoans choose these specific sites (if it is accepted that Minoan traits can be interpreted as evidence of an active Minoan presence)⁶? A possible answer is that these settlements may have been founded in important places for commercial activities, especially when the demand for metals grew considerably after the foundation of the Old Palaces. Miletos for example seems to have been the final destination of a significant commercial route⁷ related to the metals coming from the Anatolian interior (Niemeier 2005a, 4). The acquisition of Anatolian metals is proposed as a significant factor in Minoan activity there by Niemeier. Moreover, if it is accepted that they had political control of these sites, they could have defended themselves more easily against a possible attack⁸.

Another question that arises is that of why the Minoans selected these sites instead of other ones closer to regions of strong commercial interest, for instance

⁵ For thorough reviews see Niemeier 2005a, Kaiser 2005, Raymond 2005 for Miletos and Momigliano 2009 for Iasos.

⁶ Is it possible that these sites have been actively selected by researchers? It is not accidental that most of the prehistoric excavations in western Anatolia have been conducted as part of larger excavation projects on classical sites. Only recently have archaeologists turned their attention to exclusively prehistoric excavations. For further information see Greaves 2007, 7-8.

⁷ The location of sites such as Miletos on trade routes made them attractive as Mee (1998, 137) points out.

⁸ It must be borne in mind that Miletos was probably an island (Greaves 1999, 57-58) in this period, like Tavşan Adası and Iasos, while Akbük-Teichioussa was on the edge of a small peninsula (Georgakopoulos 2009, 123). That means that they had obvious advantages as far as their defense is concerned.

harbours in Cilicia or in north-western Anatolia to control trade from the Balkans and the Black Sea. It is known that during the Minoan Neopalatial period the Hittites gradually took political control of the Cilician coasts. The existence of a powerful pre-existing military/political authority perhaps deterred the Cretans from founding settlements or *emporía*. It is also possible that the Minoans confronted a similar situation in north-western Anatolia. Antagonism with the conjectured Trojan hegemony would have deterred them from any thoughts of installing settlements in the area. It can be said that, although the dangers of an *ex silentio* argument are recognised, it appears that the situation in south-western Anatolia offered better opportunities for the Cretans. The apparent lack of a strong political structure made them the predominant power in the area. Here they had the possibility to fill the vacuum⁹ and they did so by establishing their presence on the coast, especially on the Milesian peninsula. It must also be said that the apparent Minoan presence on the islands of Lemnos (Boulotis 2009; Cultraro 2005, 243) and Samothrace (Matsas 1995) in the northern Aegean, where according to recent discoveries there is significant Cretan influence despite their distance from Crete, could be the result of the absence of any other major power in that region.

Another issue that needs consideration is the character of the Minoan presence. Did the Minoans dominate the local population or was there a kind of coexistence and collaboration? Branigan's models of Minoan 'colonies' (governed colony, settlement colony, and community colony) (Branigan 1981, 23-33) are now widely recognized and have been used as a basis for debate surrounding the Minoan presence in western Anatolia (see for example Greaves 2002, 67). However, such a discussion has no value in the case of Iasos, Akbuk-Teichioussa, Tavşan Adası, Çeşme, and Didyma, as there is not sufficient Minoan(ising) material to provide answers and only hypotheses can be put forward (Georgakopoulos 2009, 34-37, 63-67, 82, 84). But even for Miletos there is still much scope for debate about the precise nature of the Minoan presence, because the very limited extent of the excavated area¹⁰ is not sufficient to apply any of Branigan's models¹¹.

Taking all this information together, it can be concluded that the objects, especially pottery as well as the artistic imitations and inspirations derived from western and central Anatolia, demonstrate that a level of cultural contact between Crete and Anatolia undoubtedly existed. The Anatolian elements in Middle Bronze Age Crete are evidence of relationships on a regular basis that might also have included contacts of a political nature (Rutter 2006). This image is enriched by the Minoan or/and Minoanising pottery and objects found in Anatolia, while the active presence of Minoan settlers in Miletos cannot be ruled out. A political aspect to

⁹ Not necessarily by establishing political domination. Cultural influences could also be seen as evidence of Minoan presence.

¹⁰ Only ca. 3.5% of the settlement of Miletos has been so far excavated, while it has been estimated to cover 50,000 m², see Greaves 2007, 8; 2002, 60; Mee 1978, 135-136; Niemeier 2005a, pl. 1.

¹¹ Greaves 2007, 8; 2010, 881; *contra* Niemeier (2005a, 9) who is inclined to believe that Branigan's 'settlement colony' model applies in the case of Miletos.

these contacts cannot be excluded, though if this is true, it is difficult to define the 'ethnic' or even the cultural identity of the people with whom the Minoans¹² communicated. Were they western Anatolians ('Arzawans'), pre-Hittite central Anatolians (Hattians or Assyrian merchants), early Hittites, some of these or all of these? This question must at present be left open. During the first phases of the Late Bronze Age, a period that marked the supposed acme of Minoan power, influences and imports from Anatolia apparently declined but never ceased. It is at this juncture that the first written sources to mention the people of Ahhiyawa must be remembered (see below). These references appear in the crucial transitional period that marks the fall of Minoan domination (either cultural or political) over a great part of the Aegean and the emergence of Mycenaean power.

Minoans in the Eastern Mediterranean context

At this point it would be necessary to focus on the Minoan and Eastern Mediterranean interconnections as an analogy to what was happening in the eastern Aegean. It has been observed that traces and influences of the Minoan and, generally speaking, the Aegean world are identifiable in almost every important ancient cultural centre of the Eastern Mediterranean. Only in Anatolia, and especially in its central part, do these influences seem to be negligible. In Egypt for instance the frescoes from Tell el-Dab^a and the Keftiu paintings from the Theban tombs have been discovered¹³, in the broader area of Syria the frescoes from Kabri, Alalakh, and Qatna testify Minoan/Aegean influence¹⁴, and in Cyprus the so-called Cypro-Minoan script reveals a Cretan connection (Smith 2003).

There are also various references to the Minoans in texts from different areas of the Eastern Mediterranean. Some texts of Zimri-Lim of Mari, which date to the 18th century BC, mention men and objects from Caphtor (*Kap-ta-ra*) (Cline 1999, 124). This name is usually identified with Crete. Another text from the same city refers to the redistribution of tin, coming from the east, to merchants from the west, including men from Caphtor (*ibidem*). Other texts list objects of Caphtorian manufacture, ranging from vases and leather sandals to weapons. Moreover, as noted above, references to Crete and the Minoans are found in texts and tombs of Egypt from 17th to 14th century. The *Keftiu* appear in tomb paintings, geographical lists, papyri, stelae, annal entries etc. (*ibidem*).

Did the Minoans and Hittites know each other?

The answer to this question may prove complex. First of all it must be made clear that the Minoans and the Hittites coexisted for a long period of time in the broad-

¹² Even the term 'Minoans' itself is sometimes problematic as there is insufficient evidence to identify the 'ethnicity' of the population of Crete in the Bronze Age. For a very thorough review of this topic see Momigliano 2009.

¹³ Bietak 1995; Bietak *et alii* 2007; Matthäus 1995; Panagiotopoulos 2001.

¹⁴ Niemeier/Niemeier 1998; Rüdén 2009, 176-182. It should be noted here that these frescoes could have been the products of travelling fresco-painters commissioned by local elites – an analogous situations to that found in Iasos (see below).

er eastern Mediterranean context and it is possible that their contacts varied over time. What can securely be said is that central Anatolia and Crete had limited contacts relative to their links with Egypt and the Near East, especially during the period of the emergence and initial development of the Hittite kingdom (*ca.* 1700-1600 BC). The aim of this paper is to put forward a hypothesis, which can be reasonably substantiated by the evidence that at this particular period of time Minoan civilisation was at its peak, whilst the Hittite kingdom was still trying to establish itself. Crete had developed commercial links with neighbouring cultures primarily by importing raw materials and by exporting fine objects. Moreover, Cretan artisans – Momigliano’s suggestion of the presence of Minoan masons and potters at Iasos (Momigliano 2009, 23, 32) – if it is accepted that they were working for the palaces – were traveling and working in Egypt, the Levantine coast and, generally, the Near East. If so, it raises the question of why Egypt and the Near Eastern kingdoms were preferred as commercial partners by the Minoans in the eastern Mediterranean? By this time the land of the Pharaohs and the hegemonies in the Near East had a long established tradition of political power, culture and high status in the eastern Mediterranean. By contrast, the Hittites were comparative newcomers trying to establish their position in the broader area. Thus began a long process of development for the Hittite kingdom, leading to its eventual transformation into a super-power almost three centuries later. However, in the period currently being examined the Hittites were still on the cultural, and political margins of the other kingdoms and states of the eastern Mediterranean. Furthermore, the hegemonies of western Anatolia, known later as the Arzawan kingdoms, were weak and without any political importance in comparison to Egypt and to the cities of the Syrian coast. It could be assumed, although I recognise that it is a very speculative theory, that the Minoans (either as a unified ‘Minoan state’¹⁵ or separate palatial elites) preferred to exchange their products with the elites who ruled Egypt and the cities of Syria in order to gain profit and recognition from the most important ‘players’ on the international ‘political’ scene. They considered that the contacts with these areas would be more profitable in various ways, not just commercially.

The situation changed during the reign of Tudhaliya I/II (the second half of the 15th century BC). He was the first Hittite king who actively became involved in western Anatolian affairs. During his reign the Hittites, according to their own written sources, reached the Aegean and, consequently, came into contact with its cultures.

The LM IB destructions in Crete and the role of the Mycenaeans

The end of the LM IB witnessed great changes throughout Crete. The Minoan palaces, except Knossos, and other major Minoan sites were destroyed, and evi-

¹⁵ It has been argued that the increasing importance of Knossos in the Neopalatial Period led to an internal *Pax Minoica* in Crete while the Knossian cultural influence spread over the island – or at least the greater part of it, see Wiener 2007.

dence that a new socio-political status quo had occurred appears across the island of Crete. Various theories have been suggested to explain the destruction of the palaces. The most common explanations include: a Mycenaean conquest¹⁶ of the island; physical disasters such as fires, earthquakes, the eruption of Thera and subsequent tsunamis (Marinatos 1939), or internal conflicts between the rulers of Knossos and those of other palaces (Hallager 1988; Niemeier 1984).

The supporters of a Mycenaean invasion and conquest of the island consider that innovations in burial customs – the so-called ‘Warrior Graves’¹⁷ – in pottery, mainly the so-called ‘Ephyrean’¹⁸ pottery, and the appearance of Linear B texts¹⁹ must be attributed to the mainlanders, who gradually took over control of the island and finally conquered it. However, it is believed that the new elements that appear in LM II should not be perceived as evidence of Mycenaean conquest, but they should rather be attributed to either an influence from mainland Greece or a new perception of already familiar forms and types of pottery and funeral practices that led to further development and evolution.

Evidence of Knossian authority over the island includes the so-called ‘replica rings’²⁰ that were found across Crete in destruction deposits dating to the LM IB period. These rings are interpreted as symbols of the power of the palace of Knossos and – according to recent petrographic analysis – their sealings are all stamped on the same type of clay with a provenance from north-central Crete, an area that roughly includes Knossos (Panagiotopoulos 2009, 257-258). Moreover, Nafplioti has recently presented the results of strontium isotope ratio analysis of human dental enamel and bone from the Warrior Graves and other burials in Crete dating from LM II onwards that demonstrate that the hypothesis of a Mycenaean invasion in Crete after the LM IB destructions could be rejected

¹⁶ Hood 1985; Popham *et alii* 1974, 254-257; Popham 1994; Driessen 1990.

¹⁷ The burial customs of the Minoan aristocratic class at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age must be ignored, because as yet no unrobbed rich LM I tomb has been found. The change probably – as Sandars wrote – “appears more dramatic than it was” (Niemeier 1984, 211). Preston has shown that, based on analysis of the burial customs during the Final and Post-Palatial period, the case for a large scale ‘invasion’ of mainlanders in Crete is almost impossible to substantiate, see Preston 1999; 2004.

¹⁸ The shape of the *Ephyrean* type goblets seems indeed to have been adopted from the mainland in the early LM II. However, the adoption of only one vessel type of mainland origin is not sufficient to prove a Mycenaean domination, see Niemeier 1984, 210.

¹⁹ The introduction of Greek as the language of the palatial bureaucracy in Knossos in the late 15th-early 14th century has been doubted. A number of scholars believe that the tablets belong to the LM IIIB period, see Niemeier 1983. At this point it should be noted that Jan Driessen has suggested that some tablets from Knossos date to the LM II period, that there is no unity of the archives, and the tablets of Linear B can occur in many contexts – he argues that they may belong to three different destruction deposits, from LM II to LM IIIB, see Driessen 1995, 244-246; 1997.

²⁰ These are large gold rings depicting bull-leaping, chariots, and combat scenes. 53 impressions from ten of these rings were found at six different LM IB sites. It is considered that the use of these rings to stamp documents on other sites means that LM IB Knossos exercised some authority over those sites: see Hallager 1996, 207-209, 239; Betts 1967, 20.

(Nafplioti 2008). It must be also noted that according to a recent theory the mainlanders helped the rulers of Knossos to take over the rest of the island, and some of them stayed and introduced new features (Rehak/Younger 1998, 149).

In Crete, firm evidence for the presence of Mycenaeans seems to appear around the time of the transition from LM IIIA1 to 2 with the appearance of a *Megaron* at Ayia Triada and Tylissos in LM IIIA2 (Niemeier 1984, 213-214).

On the islands of the Dodecanese and on the Carian-Ionian coast Minoan influence seems to have existed essentially without interruption until LM IIIA (Mee 2008, 368), while Karpathos and Kasos, the islands closest to Crete, retained a strong Minoan character during the LH III (Melas 1985; Marketou 2012, 770).

To sum up, although Mycenaean participation in the LM IB destructions cannot be ruled out – it can be suggested that despite the irregularities caused by the destructions and the appearance of new elements in the material culture, a Minoan ruling class continued to dominate the island.

The early Mycenaean presence in the Aegean islands and western Anatolia

Identification of the transition from the Minoan to the Mycenaean presence in the broader Aegean area is important for this research. Starting with the islands in the northern Aegean, it can be observed that the earliest Mycenaean pottery from Lesbos dates to LH III A1, while the pottery from Chios and Lemnos goes back to LH IIIA2 (Mee 1988, 301; Mountjoy 1998, 34). A notable example appears to be the small island of Psara, west of Chios. The earliest pottery from the Mycenaean cemetery at Archontiki dates to LH IIA while the majority of the ware dates to LH IIIA-B (Achilara 1996; Cavanagh/Mee 1998, 62, 80; Mountjoy 1998, 34).

In the Dodecanese, there was already a strong Minoan presence. In Rhodes, it is possible that Mycenaeans replaced the Minoans without obvious conflicts or destructions and this could be interpreted as the result of acculturation, a gradual and willing ‘Mycenaeanisation’ of the Cretan settlers (Cavanagh/Mee 1998, 77), especially after the disruption of the link between the Minoan settlers and their homeland during LM IIIA1. Indicative of this is the case of Trianda on Rhodes, where Minoan LM IIIA1 and Mycenaean LH IIIA1 pottery coexisted and there was evidently no problem of civil unrest within the population (Mee 1988, 301). Moreover, the earliest Mycenaean pottery from Ialysos is dated to LH IIB (Georgiadis 2003, 87; Marketou 2012, 786). Pottery from this period appeared at various sites on Kos and Karpathos, while LH IIIA2 pottery has been found on Kalymnos and other smaller islands (Mee 1988, 301).

The situation in western Anatolia does not differ greatly. The most important Aegean influence has so far been identified at Miletos. The earliest Mycenaean pottery here has been dated to LH IIIA1, with a significant increase in amount during the LH IIIA2 /LH IIIB1, when the settlement took on a strong Mycenaean character (Niemeier 2005a, 10-11). The earliest Mycenaean pottery from Iasos is dated to the LH IIB/LH IIIA period, but the levels are too disturbed for secure information (Mee 1978, 129; Benzi 2005, 207-214). The pottery from the ceme-

tery of Müskebi is dated to the LH IIIA2-IIIIC period (Georgiadis 2003, 75), while the Mycenaean pottery from the chamber tomb of Ayasoluk at Selçuk near Ephesus belongs to the LH IIIA2 period (Büyükkolancı 2007, 21-22). In Troy, a small amount of Mycenaean pottery is dated to the LH IIIA1 (Troy VIg), while there is much LH IIIA2 pottery (nearly 900 sherds) from the Troy VIIh destruction levels (Mountjoy 1998, 35).

The appearance of Ahhiyawa

According to the Hittite state archives of Hattusa the first references to Ahhiyawa come from the ‘Madduwatta Indictment’²¹, which is dated to the reign of king Arnuwanda I (1420/1400-1400/1380 BC)²² and describes events that took place during the reign of his father, Tudhaliya I/II (1450/1420-1420/1400 BC). According to the text of the indictment, the king of Hatti complains to Madduwatta, a ruler in western Anatolia under Hittite overlordship, about the crimes of the latter during the reign of the previous Hittite king, Tudhaliya. In particular, when Attarissiya, the man from Ahhiya (an older version of Ahhiyawa) attacked Madduwatta, the Hittites supported their vassal ruler. But the latter later became an ally of Arzawa, the most important enemy of the Hittites in the region. Moreover, he created a new alliance with his former enemy, Attarissiya, and together they made a foray into Cyprus²³.

The linguistic evidence

Although in the history of this debate the emphasis placed on linguistic and literary arguments has caused a disproportionate amount of heated debate, causing problems to the interpretation of the archaeological material, it is necessary to include some comments about the nature of the word ‘Ahhiyawa’ itself. It is accepted as a fact by many scholars that this word corresponds to the Homeric ‘Achaioi’ (see page 137) and consequently with the inhabitants of Mycenaean Greece. However, none have so far sought to provide an explanation of the word itself. Viewed from the perspective of the Hittite capital of central Anatolia, the word might be expected to have conveyed the Hittite perception of a people of the Aegean and this may relate to the form of the word itself. Is it more reasonable to interpret the name Ahhiyawa as a Hittite version for a name that was used by the indigenous population of the Aegean to describe themselves, or is it more likely that the writers of the Hittite archives used a word from their own language that was related to some characteristic of this land and its people?

²¹ Niemeier 2005a, 16-17; Bryce 1989a, 298-299; Beckman/Bryce/Cline 2011, 69-100.

²² The dates that have been proposed by Astour (1989, 50-52, 68-69, 77) and McMahon (2002, 60) will be used in this article, although I am aware of the slightly different chronologies that have been proposed by other scholars i.e Bryce 2003b, xi; Klinger 2007, 124.

²³ A possible indication of a Minoan fleet or a part of it? For activities on a large scale such as in the case of Cyprus it should have been essential to have both a powerful army and fleet.

The etymology of the word Ahhiyawa must first be considered. The Indo-European root *Ach-* is connected with water. Many names of rivers and lakes, such as Inachos - Ἰναχός, Acheloos - Ἀχελώος, Lake Acherousia - Ἀχερουσία, and others have this root (Sakellarakis/Sapouma-Sakellarakis 1997, 47). Even in the Hittite language the word *akw-anzi* means ‘they drink’ (Gurney 1990, 99), while the Luwian word *aku-* means ‘to drink’ (Gamkrelidze/Ivanov 1995, 607). This association with water endures into Latin (*aqua*) and even into modern Indo-European languages (e.g. *acqua* in Italian, *agua* in Spanish). Given the widespread usage of the *Ach-*root to indicate water it is worth considering whether and, if so, how the word *Ahhiyawa* might relate to some physical characteristic of the land. Although densely populated with islands and people, the Aegean region is dominated by water, i.e. the Aegean Sea itself, and it seems reasonable to suggest that the Luwian/Hittite name for the people of the Aegean was something like ‘Sea People’, i.e. *Ach-...’*. At this point it must be noted that the name Πελασγοί - ‘Pelasgians’ was commonly used by the ancient Greeks in order to describe the older inhabitants of Greece. What it is above all important to mention is that this name is strongly connected with water as it probably derives from the word Πέλαγος - Pelagos which means ‘Sea’ e.g. Ἀργαίο Πέλαγος/‘Aegean Sea’ in Greek²⁴.

Assuming a central Anatolian perspective on the question again, could the name ‘Ahhiyawa’ have been attributed by the Hittite scribes to representatives of both the Minoan and Mycenaean cultures of the Aegean²⁵? There are precedents for the Hittites labelling diverse ethnic groups with a single name. An example is the word ‘Hurrian’, a general term used by the Hittites for the description of not only the kingdom of Mittanni but also of the nomadic tribes who lived in the same area (Bryce 2003a, 43; 1989b, 3-5). In this context, it is quite possible that the Hittite scribes used ‘Ahhiyawa’ to describe the people of the Aegean, be they Minoans or Mycenaeans.

Moreover, it may be remarked that the place-name *Achaiwia*, very similar to the Hittite *Ahhiyawa* and the Homeric *Achaiói*, appears on a tablet of Linear B from Knossos (C 914). This is the only evidence, but no similar reference can be found anywhere else in the Linear B archives (Doria 1965, 46, 224, 280; Bryce 1989b, 4). Crete is the only place in the Aegean world where a word connected to Ahhiyawa appears.

Evaluation and interpretation of the existing information

Putting this information together, it seems logical to suggest that the archaeological material demonstrates that the active Mycenaean presence in the eastern Aegean and western Anatolia dates from *after* the first references to Ahhiyawa in the Hittite archives. A closer examination of the data seems to support the idea that islanders from Crete were still active in the above area at the time of these

²⁴ Dr. G. Owens, *personal communication*; Liddel-Scott 1940, 1356-1357.

²⁵ The hypothesis of a plausible identification of Ahhiyawa with the Minoanising centres of the south-eastern Aegean has been also suggested by Melas (1988, 118).

first references and they may possibly have been involved in conflicts between the local population and the Hittites (campaign of Tudhaliya I/II in Assuwa)²⁶. The Aegean swords that were found at Hattusa (Cline 1996) and Kastamonu (Ünal 1999) date to the late decades of the 15th or early decades of the 14th century and seems to belong to Sandars' Type B classification (the sword from İzmir was not found in any context). Although they have been characterized as 'Mycenaean', the earliest examples of this type have been found in Crete, dating from MM II (Sandars 1961, 22-24), and a Minoan origin cannot be ruled out. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that these swords and the so-called 'Mycenaean warrior'²⁷ on the Hittite bowl from Hattusa might just as possibly imply Minoan military involvement in western Anatolian affairs, as much as Mycenaean. Is it not therefore possible to postulate, given the ambivalent nature of much of the evidence, that it was the agents of Minoan culture and not the Mycenaeans, as has previously been thought, who were the Aegean people who first became embroiled in Anatolian affairs and were first referred to by the Hittite scribes as 'Ahhiyawa'? Regarding the character of the Mycenaean presence, it could be assumed that the role of the mainlanders during this period of the Minoan domination throughout the Aegean was to fill the vacuum in the areas which the Minoans – for their own reasons – never reached.

To sum up, it has been suggested here that after Tudhaliya's campaigns in the Arzawa Lands, the Hittites came into contact with the Aegean populations, possibly Cretans, who were already settled in Anatolia or had at least heavily influenced the behaviour of some of the local population. These Aegeans, when they became involved in the conflict between the Hittites and the native Anatolian people, supported the latter, as both the archival material and the archaeological finds testify. In the author's opinion, an intervention by Crete under the lead of Knossos cannot be ruled out – it must be added that during the above period (LM II) Knossos was undoubtedly the most powerful polity in the southern Aegean (Rutter 2006, 151; Girella 2011, 406), so it can reasonably be assumed that it was in a position to undertake overseas activities across the Aegean. Rutter has recently argued that "the name Ahhiya or Ahhiyawa was originally applied by the Hittites to the LM II-III A2 early kingdom centered at Knossos". However, although Rutter tends to accept the 'Cretan theory' for the appearance of Ahhiyawa, he considers that this happened when a Mycenaean administration came to power at Knossos²⁸.

²⁶ It is significant to mention that the word *Assuwa* was known to the Minoans as it appears in a LM IB tablet of Linear A from Ayia Triada as *A-su-ja*, see Morris 2001, 426.

²⁷ The so-called 'Mycenaean warrior' could be a depiction of an Aegean or western Anatolian warrior in general and not specifically of a Mycenaean one (Dr. A. Papadopoulos, *personal communication*). This is another case where the 'established Mycenaeanisation' of an object is doubted (in this case a Mycenaean warrior seen through the eyes of a Hittite artisan).

²⁸ Rutter 2006, 151. Girella (2011) has also argued about the identification of Ahhiyawa with the Mycenaean Knossos of LM II – III A2 early, while Müller Celka (2005) identifies the kingdom of Ahhiyawa with Mycenaean Crete after examining funerary practices in Crete and western Anatolia.

The transition period in the Aegean: a perspective from the Egyptian and Hittite sources

An interesting aspect of what one might call the 'transitional period' in the Aegean (the gradual replacement of Minoan domination by the Mycenaean) is provided by some Egyptian sources that date back to the reign of Amenhotep III (ca. 1390-1352), which could possibly shed more light on this issue. As already noted, depictions of *Keftiu* (Minoans/Aegeans carrying artifacts and products mainly from the Aegean) in several Theban tombs of the 15th century have been considered to be the result of connections and interaction between these two peoples at the time of the acme of Minoan commercial activities in the Eastern Mediterranean. In the next century references to the Aegean can also be identified from other sources.

More specifically, the site of Kom el-Hetan contains a significant amount of information that confirms the contact between Egypt and the Aegean. An inscribed list, known as the *Aegean List*, on the base of a statue from the mortuary temple of Amenhotep III consists of fourteen names that can be identified with Aegean sites. Two names on the right of the front of the base are separated from the others by a double cartouche of Amenhotep III; *Keftiu*²⁹ and *Tanaja* (a word frequently correlated with the Mycenaean, *Δαναοί* – *Danaoi* in Homer). *Amnisos*, *Phaistos*, *Kydonia*, *Mycenae*, *Boetian Thebes*³⁰, *Knossos*, *Nauplion*, *Kythera* and various other places also appear in the list³¹.

The existence of this list has stimulated much discussion. Among the various theories that have been expounded, the idea of an Egyptian embassy to the Aegean is considered quite convincing (Cline 1998, 245; Wachsmann 1987, 96-97). In my opinion, the coexistence of the names *Keftiu* and *Tanaja* in the same context probably suggests that the Egyptians at the time of Amenhotep III were aware of the fact that two different and distinctive entities, at least culturally if not to say politically speaking, inhabited the Aegean. They probably recognized that the islanders and the mainlanders of the region that equates with modern southern Greece and the Aegean were competing for hegemony of the area, and both possibly had spheres of influence; however, according to the *Aegean List* it is possible that the Mycenaean had not yet overcome Minoan power in the Aegean³².

Another list, engraved on column drums in Amenhotep III's Amon temple at Soleb in Nubia includes the names *Keftiu* and *Tanaja*, as well as the names *Hatti*,

²⁹ During the reign of Amenhotep III the term *Keftiu* appears five times, while the term *Tanaja* is found three times: see Cline 1998, 239.

³⁰ Edel has argued that the name d-y-q-e-i-s, which appears in the *Aegean List*, equates to Thebes, see Edel 1988, 30-35.

³¹ Astour 1966; Cline 1998, 236-238; Edel 1966, 33-60; Haider 1996, 144; Kitchen 1965, 5-6; O'Connor 1996, 56-60; Strange 1980, 21-27; Wachsmann 1987, 95-99.

³² It is necessary to highlight the possibility that there were several Minoan and Mycenaean states that competed with each other for the domination in the Aegean cannot be ruled out. What seems clear from the *Aegean List* is the fact that the Egyptians could probably recognise the differences between two cultural entities.

Arzawa, Qadesh, Sangar (Babylonia), *Naharina* (Mitanni), *Tunip*, and *Ugarit*³³. Additionally, another topographical list from the Amon-Ra temple at Karnak has the name *Tanaja* between the names *Hatti, Arzawa, Sangar*, and *Naharina* (Cline 1998, 241; Edel 1966, 37, 51; Haider 1988, 11-12). It becomes apparent that each list includes the known world located to the north of Egypt (Cline 1998, 242).

At this point it must be noted that fourteen objects inscribed with the cartouche of Amenhotep III or Queen Tiye were found at six sites in the Aegean (Mycenae, Ayios Elias, Ialysos, Ayia Triadha, Khania, and Knossos) revealing the strong cultural, commercial, and probably political links between the two regions. It has been suggested that many or all of them arrived in the Aegean in the LH/LM IIIA1 period, during the reign of Amenhotep III, as royal gifts. It is also possible that these royally-inscribed items arrived together, in a single voyage (Cline 1987, 11-13; 1994, 39; 1998, 247). The probable link between these objects and the Aegean List can be suggested from the fact that four of the six sites where the aforementioned objects were found are named at Kom el-Hetan: Knossos, Phaistos/Ayia Triadha³⁴, Kydonia, and Mycenae, where up to nine of these objects³⁵ (at least six and possibly nine faience plaques) were discovered in LH IIIA and LH IIIB contexts (Cline 1987, 8-11; 1990, 200-212; 1994, 39; 1998, 247). An Egyptian embassy, if it did occur, was directed towards Mycenae as the presence of the majority of the above items indicates. It is possible that the Egyptians, realising that an old world (that of the Minoans), or at least its political presence, was about to end, preferred to create closer relations with the agents of a new, vigorous culture in order to serve their own interests. A similar purpose seems to have led to the marriage of Amenhotep III with the daughter of Tarhundaradu of Arzawa (Moran 1992, 101-102). It has been suggested that Amenhotep III became involved in the affairs of the Aegean and Anatolia to prevent the growing power of the Hittites, who under the command of Suppiluliuma I became a threat to Egyptian interests (Cline 1998, 248-249). Although this theory does not appear to be without foundation, further research will shed more light on this topic.

As a final point it can be assumed that the alleged mission from Pharaonic Egypt to the Aegean would probably have served a dual purpose: to reaffirm connections with the Minoans, an old trading partner, and to establish relations with the rising power in the Aegean, the Mycenaeans (Cline 1998, 248).

The Hittite archives offer a very interesting perspective on the Aegean 'transition period'. It is noteworthy that the first mention of 'Ahhiyawa' – 'Ahhiya' to be exact, an earlier version of the above term – took place during the reign of

³³ Cline 1998, 240; Edel 1980, 65-68; Strange 1980, 20-21; Vercoutter 1956, 78-79.

³⁴ Cline equates the two sites, but it can be suggested that a certain amount of doubt remains about this equation, because the identification of local Minoan place-names through the Amarna archive is quite ambiguous.

³⁵ A new plaque fragment, originally discovered during Mylonas' excavations in 1975, was recognised by K. Shelton in 2000 in the Nauplio Museum: see Philipps/Cline 2005, 320.

Arnuwanda in relation to an incident that occurred when his father Tudhaliya was still king. The next reference³⁶ to Ahhiyawa dates to the reign of Mursili II, almost 80-100 years later. It is conceivable that this lack of sources in the Hittite archives reflects the turbulent situation in the Aegean and the possible interruption of contacts between both areas during the process of replacing Minoan domination by a Mycenaean. Moreover, I believe that the above fact must also be combined with the situation of the Hittites at this time. The first decades of the 14th century were the period of the so-called *concentric invasions* (Bryce 2003b, 32). The Hittite kingdom was almost destroyed and for a short period of time Arzawa became the dominant power in Anatolia. This fact also explains the marriage between Amenhotep III and the daughter of the Arzawan king Tarhundaradu (Bryce 2003a, 56).

Conclusion

Bearing the above in mind, the situation could be summarised as follows: when the Hittites first came into contact with Ahhiyawa, they possibly interacted with the agents of Minoan culture, which dominated in the Aegean. However, after a long and turbulent period in both the Aegean and central Anatolia, these links were interrupted. When the Hittites restored their power in the area in the late 14th century and again started interacting with western Anatolia and the Aegean, the Mycenaeans had already established their domination over the islands and perhaps also controlled some points on the Anatolian coast. From this point on, all the Hittite references to Ahhiyawa refer to the Mycenaeans.

The Egyptian sources, although they differ from those of the Hittites, could be interpreted in the same way. Only the mention of the name *Keftiu* in the 15th century indicates interactions with the Minoans, while the reference to both *Keftiu* and *Tanaja* during the first half of the 14th century could be seen as evidence of the turbulent situation in the Aegean and the struggle between the Minoans and Mycenaeans for dominance.

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³⁶ The text mentions that during the reign of Suppiluliuma I the Great King sent his wife (the mother of Mursili) into exile in the land of Ahhiyawa (Beckman/Bryce/Cline 2011, 158-161).

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