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THE MANNER OF REPRESENTATION OF ANIMALS AND NATURAL LANDSCAPE IN EGYPTIAN NEW KINGDOM ART AND AEGEAN BRONZE AGE ART – A COMPARISON

A number of articles and theories have already been written concerning possible interconnections between Egypt and the Aegean. Mutual influences, apart from material traces and foreign imports found in numerous excavations, are sometimes clearly visible in the art of both civilizations and should come as no surprise – after all it is only to be expected that two major cultural forces in the Mediterranean basin crossed paths and were inspired by the strangers across the sea. Although currents of influence between both areas crossed the sea at many different times, some particularly interesting examples during the Egyptian New Kingdom and Aegean Middle Bronze Age should be examined in detail[1]. Many scholars argue that Aegean influences in Egypt during the second millennium B.C., considering iconography and style (and sometimes also techniques) seem strong, especially in wall decorations, with particular increase during the early 18th Dynasty. A different issue arises when the origin of those influences needs to be explained – were Aegean artists actually brought to Egypt or were Egyptian artists travelling to the Aegean and bringing foreign

[1] The question of the chronological placement and chronological comparisons between both civilizations poses some problems, as various schools and ideas regarding chronology currently exist for both Egypt and the Aegean. With no consensus on a chronological timeline for each area, it is challenging to undoubtedly state which periods correspond to one another on the opposite banks of the Mediterranean Sea. While exact dating is not particularly crucial for the purpose of this paper, establishing a general timeline is still necessary to put the below discussed art in context. In absolute dates, the 18th Dynasty ruled in Egypt ca. 1539-1292 B.C. (Hornung, Krauss, Warburton 2006), which roughly corresponds to periods LM II, LM IIIA1 and LM III A2 on Crete and periods LH IIB, LH IIIA1 and LH III A2 on the mainland (Brysbaert, 2008). It is especially difficult to find a proper correlation in the light of continuous disputes regarding absolute chronology of the Aegean Bronze Age. Cf. Åström 1987; Bietak, Czerny 2007.

traditions home? There is also always a possibility that the decorations were not in fact of Aegean origin, but a result of modifications of earlier traditions. This paper aims to discuss possible Aegean influences in the mode of representing animals and landscape visible in New Kingdom wall decorations, with particular interest in the art of the so called Amarna Period. In order to comprehensively address this issue, however, a more general comparison first needs to be made regarding animal and landscape representations in both cultures. Caution is advised in such an analysis, since in numerous cases previously researched by archaeologists and art historians what first seems to be obvious foreign influences turns out to be indigenous, yet slightly altered forms of art. The Amarna Period, with its unusual new currents in art, is especially prone to misinterpretations[2].

Before Amarna representations can be discussed in more detail, we should first shortly present the most important earlier Egyptian modes of representation of animals and landscape and their Aegean counterparts. This will not only put late New Kingdom art in more context, but also allow to see the continuous tradition of representations as opposed to foreign influences and patterns. Attention must also be paid to the themes and functions of Egyptian and Aegean art. We must at all times remember that difficulties may arise from comparing art from palaces and domestic environments, as is the case in most Aegean examples, with Egyptian art mostly originating from sacral and funerary sources. That is not to say that Aegean art was not sacred or magical, although this meaning may seem less clear than the rather obvious Egyptian symbolics. Therefore it is perhaps easier to strip the art of its funerary, religious or domestic connotations, not to analyze themes and meanings, but simply the modes of representation – such a comparison will still yield evidence of influences and interconnections (or the lack of such), but without the need to analyze complex and often ambiguous meanings. This paper will be divided into two separate parts, the first dealing with a more general Egyptian-Aegean comparison, with insight into the development of particular modes of representation, while the second part will be devoted to late 18th Dynasty art, focusing on tracking possible Aegean influences in animal and landscape representations.

[2] For the purpose of this paper Amarna Period shall be defined as the end of the 18th Dynasty, that is the rule of Akhenaten (1353-1336 B.C.) and his successors, Semenkhkare (1336-1334 B.C.), Nefernefruaten (1334-? B.C.), Tutankhamen (?-1324 B.C.) and Ay (1323-1320 B.C.), with some stylistic features characteristic for this period also visible slightly earlier during the rule of Akhenaten's father, Amenhotep III (1390-1353 B.C.). Unfortunately, due to possible co-regencies, absolute dates of their rule are also hard to establish (all dates cited above after Hornung, Krauss, Warburton 2006).

PART I

Animals

Whether walking, lying or sitting, animals are as a rule shown in profile by Egyptian artists. As with all rules in Egyptian art, however, here too some exceptions may be observed. In some cases of particular species a composite view was chosen, one that is well known from human depictions and which was so acutely defined by Heinrich Schäfer in his comprehensive study *Principles of Egyptian Art* (Schäfer 2002). According to his definition, Egyptian art was based on frontal images, that is images composed from such aspects of a given object that - according to Egyptian artists - pictured the most important qualities of the object in question[3]. Basing on these observations it comes as no surprise that a side view was most commonly chosen for depictions of animals, especially the four-legged species. In such a depiction all the essential characteristics were visible: the body and head shape and four legs as well as other distinctivefeatures such as tails or horns. As a consequence artists avoided depicting such creatures in a way that could lead to a misinterpretation of the number of legs (when some of the limbs would be hidden behind the others) – all needed to be visible to capture the essence of an animal. Two-legged creatures, whether humans or birds, were also always shown in such a way that both legs were visible.

There are some interesting exceptions from this general rule, as mentioned above, either when a fully lateral position was chosen for an animal (not all legs visible) or a composite view was applied (parts in profile, parts *en face*). The former was for instance applied to crocodiles. Interestingly, those reptiles were at first depicted in two ways: laterally, in full profile, with two legs visible, or in "aerial" view from above, with four legs stretched to the sides. In time however the first mode became exclusive for crocodiles, while the second became valid for lizards (Germond 2001, 101). This way the two kinds of reptiles were easily distinguished. The above mentioned composite mode of representation was always chosen for the specific reason of capturing essential characteristics that could not have been rendered in profile. The most commonly encountered example are the horns of both domestic cattle and cattle-like desert species, which are usually depicted in front while the rest of the body is in profile (just like the horns on the head of Hathor)[4]. Another example is the cobra: while an ordinary

[3] As Schäfer wites: „[...] figures are always drawn as if their planes were looked at frontally". From that definition he produced the terms *geradaufsichtig* and *geradvorstellig* (Schäfer 2002, 91).

[4] For instance the famous scene of Ramesess II hunting wild bulls in the marshes from Medinet Habu (19th Dynasty). In contrast, the horns of other types of herbivores were often depicted from the side, as it was easier to distinguish the animal species this way (e.g. very characteristic shape of oryx horns).

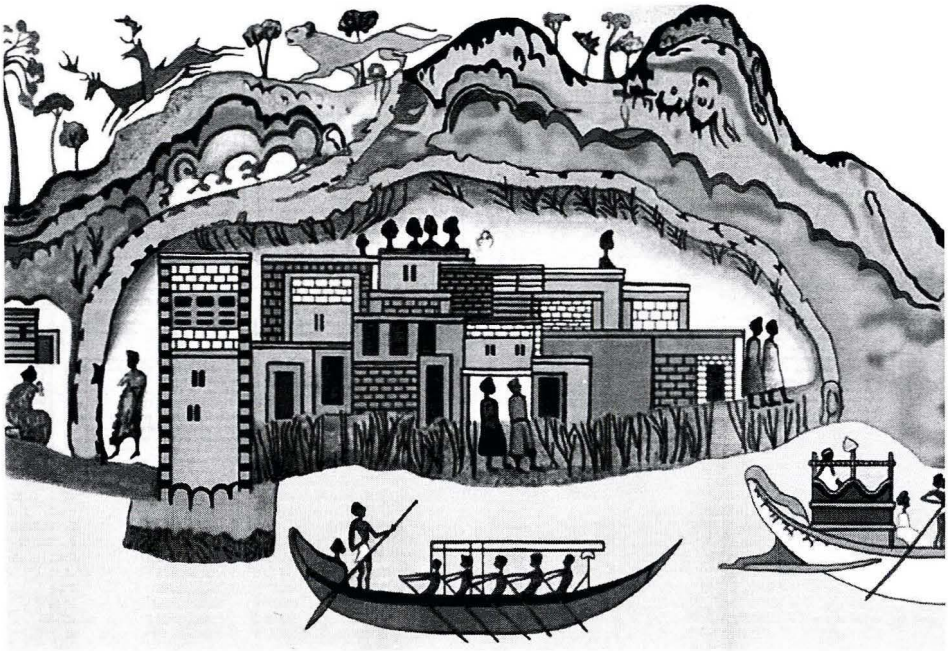

Fig 1. Redrawing of a fragment of the "Miniature Frieze" from Thera

snake would be depicted in a side view, this species was shown in aspective: the head in profile, the hood *en face* and the rest of the coiling body in profile[5]. As it would be very hard to distinctly show an open cobra hood in profile, the artist chose the easiest way to depict this characteristic feature – and no viewer has any doubt regarding the species of snake that is depicted. Yet another example may be found in the bird kingdom, where most depictions are closely connected to hieroglyphic bird postures. While most birds are shown with their heads in profile, the owl's head is depicted frontally[6]. Contrary to the head, plumage could be depicted in more ways - flat wings folded to the side, spread wings shown frontally above and below the body or both wings above the body and tails in back view (especially if typical for a given bird species). A strong connection to the well established hieroglyphs would indicate a high level of standardization and uniformity – most of the modes of bird representation can easily be matched

[5] Examples of *uraei*-cobra depictions are extremely common. An interesting work of art showing both a cobra and other types of snakes (in full profile) is a votive stele of the serpent-goddess Meresger accompanied by small vipers from the Louvre (19th Dynasty, inv. E 13084)

[6] Mostly encountered among hieroglyphs, the owl sign is listed as no. G17 on Gardiner's sign list (Wilkinson 1992, 215)

with Gardiner's hieroglyph list - yet surprisingly some very innovative aspects also occurred side by side with traditional ones. In fact, alighting birds and flying birds seem to be among the most naturalistically depicted animals in Egyptian art. Examples of all the above can be found in the well known scene from the tomb-chapel of Nebamun, showing the owner hunting in the marshes (British Museum, inv. EA 37977).

Finally some attention should be paid to animal movement – like every aspect of Egyptian art, it was subject to certain rules, which seemed to favor the static over the dynamic. Yet however static animal forms may appear, as Henriette Groenewegen-Frankfort noted, "[...] animals are potentially mobile, their posture and gestures must imply a moment of transient activity [...] quite independent of the fact that either a phase of movement or rigid immobility may be chosen, for organic immobility is never absolute" (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1987, 5). Some types of animals were of course more prone to be shown in dynamic movement. For instance flying birds would sometimes be depicted in very dynamic poses, with their bodies horizontal, diagonal or pointing downwards. An interesting example is the kingfisher, which from a very early stage (5th Dynasty, relief from the funerary temple adjoining the pyramid of Userkaf in Saqqara) was shown frontally with stretched wings, a wide tail and neck bent downwards towards some danger or intruder (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, inv. JE 56001).

The movement of mammals was usually either a stride or a gallop. Striding mammals have their inner front leg put forward, which is also repeated in the hind legs (similarly to humans, whose inner leg is depicted in front). This manner of representation is not usually reflected in the natural behavior of such animals – the parallel use of legs while walking, or the so called ambling (moving by using both legs on one side alternatively with both on the other) mostly applies to quadrupeds with long legs and is not seen in for instance walking cattle. It creates a static, dignified, statue-like impression. But even running animals were often depicted with the parallel stride, usually with their front and hind legs depicted close together and extending further apart to the front and back. As opposed to a leisurely walk, however, the parallel stride is indeed characteristic for galloping mammals and must have been often observed in nature. Still the artists felt compelled to picture all legs firmly touching the ground, the inner legs put forward. Surprisingly enough, even though such a mode of depiction is very static, Egyptian artists managed to create very lively scenes, especially when it came to desert hunts and animal pursuits. An extraordinary example was carved in relief in the rock tomb of the nomarch Senbi at Meir (reign of Amenemhet I, 12th Dynasty). The scene depicts the tomb owner shooting desert game, with various species of herbivores running from the hunter and his trained dogs in pursuit. Not only did the artist try to depict the desert environment in an innovative way (with no registers, as was customary, but rather waving ground lines at different heights), but he also managed to portray animals running in panic and fighting to the death – all with

the limited expressions of movement that were available to him. In almost every case running animals are depicted with all four legs touching the ground, whether they are dogs chasing or antelopes escaping (exceptions include jumping gazelles with hind legs touching the ground and forelegs raised above) (Houlihan 1996, 44). With time, expressiveness also developed in animal movement depictions, although it was not until the Middle Kingdom that "a perfectly unambiguous example of a running animal with two feet off the ground" (Edgerton 1936, 185) was created. Major changes in this matter were introduced during the 18th Dynasty and will be discussed further in the present paper.

One might argue whether Aegean artists showed a much better observation sense and awareness of the movement of animals or whether they simply felt less compelled to follow formal rules, often established centuries ago, as was the case in Egypt. As Barry Kemp wrote, Egyptian art was created by a society based on measuring, inspecting and controlling, with an ideology that stressed continuity with the past (Kemp 1991, 20). As a result, the modes of representation of animals in the Aegean are more varied, yet the basic rule of animal depiction was true for both civilizations – it was more convenient and natural to depict an animal in profile, it allowed to better capture its essential qualities and movement. Aegean artists however were consequent in their choice and portrayed all animal features from the side – including horns[7] (obviously bucrania need to be excluded as a specific decoration scheme). We do have some objects with animal heads shown *en face,* however the entire head is depicted this way, not just horns. An excellent example are the famous Vapheio cups (Creto-Mycean, 1st half of the 15th century B.C., National Archaeological Museum of Athens, inv. nos. 1758, 1759), showing bull heads both *en face* and in profile – clearly it was not a matter of any canon or convention, but the artist's choice. Perhaps the charging bull was shown *en face*, with his head down and horns pointing dangerously towards his attacker, to signify immediate danger and a bigger threat.

When it comes to animal movement, Aegean artists would normally depict them with alternating strides, as opposed to the less realistic parallel stride discussed above. A very interesting mode of representation encountered in both Egypt and the Aegean is the so called flying gallop[8]. It was much more common and widespread among the Aegeans who, while depicting animals in the flying

[7] Some exceptions include seals with depictions of the head in profile and horns *en face*, very similar to their Egyptian counterparts (Younger 1988, xviii).

[8] The flying gallop is a term used in the history of art to describe a representation of quadrupeds shown running at full speed, with the front legs stretched together forward, the hind legs stretched similarly to the back almost horizontally, with the soles of the hoofs often vertical or even depicted up. In terms of biology only small and light animals ever assume a similar position in nature, because their foot sequence in galloping is rotary. Larger and heavier animals, such as horses, cattle and most larger mammals, with a transverse galloping sequence, never actually assume this position.

gallop, usually showed the inner hind leg of an animal stretched backwards and the inner fore leg stretched forward. This movement type is encountered in Egypt from the times of Tuthmosis III (1479-1425 B.C. after Hornung, Krauss, Warburton 2006), with a few exceptions. The most notable come from the First Intermediate Period and from the ceremonial dagger of Ahmose. According to one of the most influential researchers of the interconnections between Egypt and the Aegean, Helene Kantor (Kantor 1947, 62-64), the flying gallop was a motif implemented in Egypt based on Aegean influence – and features pointing to this conclusion are the same leg arrangements as in Aegean art as well as a reverse twist of the heads of animals depicted in full motion.

Numerous depictions of birds from the Aegean are perhaps best represented by the very well preserved wall paintings from Thera, which constitute one of the earliest examples of large-scale painting in Greece (Doumas 1992). A large variety of views in which birds are shown are a proof of a good biological knowledge of the artists as well a considerable freedom of conception and design which, according to Doumas, border on naturalism. The palace in Knossos also features a number of bird representations of high quality, some quite unique (e.g. a blue bird shown in back view in the House of Frescoes) (Evans 1928, pl. XI). Let us briefly examine the most interesting modes of representation: a profile view in flight, with the body depicted horizontally, the wings shown upwards and overlapping and the tail shown from either above or below (Doumas 1992, figs. 73, 74); an aspective view similar to the Egyptian concept, with the body depicted horizontally in profile and the wings painted form either above or below (Thera: Doumas 1992, fig. 135, Knossos: Evans 1928, fig. 262); a three-quarter view either from above or below with tails depicted in an angled fashion (Doumas 1992, fig. 69) and finally a view of sitting birds, with the tail shown in profile (Evans 1928, figs. 51-54). It is interesting that both Aegean and Egyptian artists allowed themselves for more experiments and innovations when depicting birds than any other members of the animal kingdom. Perhaps it was the freedom of movement and the grace of flight that inspired them.

Natural landscape

The vast topic of the modes and evolution of the representation of landscape in Egyptian art ventures far beyond the short frames of this paper, but studies on this subjects are advanced and readily available in the works of such accomplished authors as for instance Heinrich Schäfer (Schäfer 2002, especially chapter 4.4. Miscellaneous studies in the rendering of nature, 198-258). We must also remember that "landscape" is a very broad term, comprising not only the physical elements of land and water with living elements such as vegetation, but also human elements including buildings and structures. While various urban landscapes including depictions of buildings, cities

and ruins are a common element in Egyptian art, only the rural landscapes focusing on natural elements will be of interest in this paper. Therefore just a short summary of the most important aspects of Egyptian natural landscape depiction will be presented below, followed by a comparison to the Aegean nature representations.

At first glance it seems that Egyptian artists did not consider the imaging of nature particularly important and in most cases treated it in rather symbolical terms – the basic idea that registers should be always used and strictly adhered to resulted in reducing space to a ground line, on which various plants and animals would be represented thereby identifying the scene as a depiction of a natural scenery. This idea, so far from what we today consider a landscape, was highly symbolic and only allowed for a more liberal approach in hunting scenes, where first attempts to loosen the register system were made. During the Old Kingdom the land was depicted as a thin irregular line of ground drawn above the strip separating registers. The desert would be indicated by undulating ground lines, with more than one arranged above one another (as in registers). Animals would be shown standing on that line, sometimes next to a bush or tree to indicate the surrounding landscape. Animals were in most cases rather inflexibly adjusted to the line of the desert, with an occasional antelope rearing or raising a leg. During the Middle Kingdom the order and stiffness seem less apparent with the use of more landscape features, such as trees, desert shrubs and vines, but the general idea of scene arrangement remains the same (with a few notable exceptions, among them the previously discussed hunting scene in the chapel of Senbi at Meir – see above).

It wasn't until the New Kingdom, and in particular the 18th dynasty, that a number of attempts to loosen the ordering into registers are found. As Heinrich Schäfer wrote, "the beginnings of a true representation of landscape develop from sparse features necessary to the action" (Schäfer 2002, 44). Yet even with some innovations visible in composition, traditional landscape features remained unchanged. Therefore, when it came to depicting a particular, defined area instead of a generic scene, the artist was at a loss. Some attempts were made at depicting actual surroundings, among them a relief showing a 'crocodile island' dating to the Old Kingdom (Sun Temple of Niuserre). The depiction only shows a strip of land surrounded by water, with no action and no human figures - as Groenwegen-Frankfort describes it, "[it] does appeal to special imagination, invites the spectator to visualize a definite, probably an actually existing, locality" (1987, 55). An interesting example on a much grander scale than the above mentioned comes from the Punt reliefs at Deir el-Bahri, illustrating an actual event – the famous expedition ordered by Queen Hatshepsut. The artist was unable to incorporate any topographical features characteristic of the far-away country (whether he had seen them himself or known them from second-hand descriptions was irrelevant – the mode of representation of landscape simply did

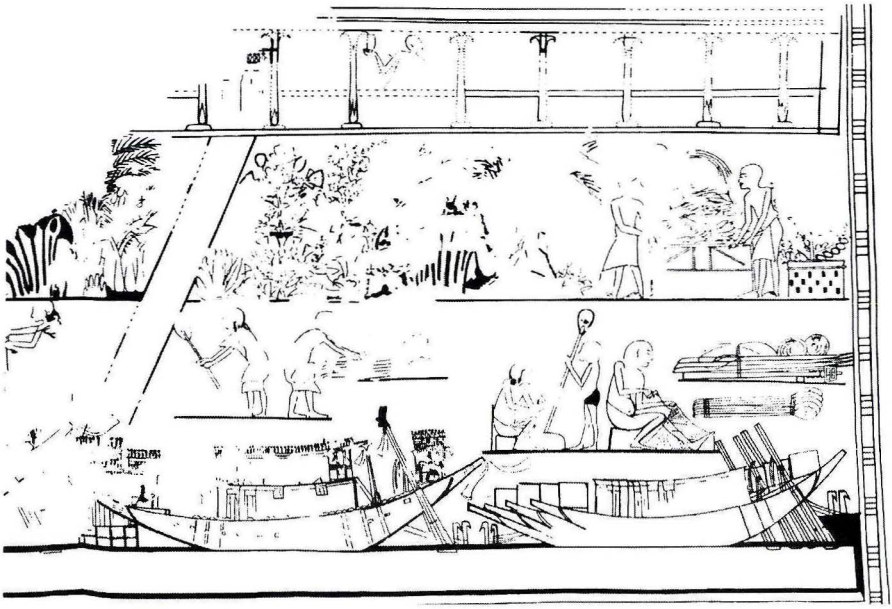

Fig 2. Redrawing of a fragment of an Amarna relief with riverbank activities (after Davies 1908, pl. 5)

not allow for such exceptions). Except from rather schematic representations of foreign trees (with an interesting depiction of a tree-climbing baboon) and foreign dwellings, the only way to indicate that the scene takes place in exotic surroundings was to list foreign products and animals that were encountered there, among them giraffes, cheetahs, monkeys, rhinos, resin, gum, ebony and incense (Philips 1997, 431, fig. 2).

Bodies of water are of particular interest, as they are difficult to render properly within the traditional measures available to an Egyptian artist and therefore are either shown in a very schematic way, or provoke bold artistic attempts. The Mace of King Scorpion is one of the earliest attempts of this kind (Dynasty 0, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford inv. no. E3632). Instead of a fixed register the king is depicted standing on a lightly undulating line forming a river bank. The river is depicted in an aerial, map-like view below the king, bifurcating into smaller arms separating patches of land (Ciałowicz 1997, 11-27).Water is usually depicted in the form of a thin rectangular strip with an indication of waves. It is most commonly encountered in representations of fishing, fowling and water game hunting on the river Nile, in most cases with a background of the papyrus marshes – a green rectangle with straight, even papyrus stems, only rarely bent to create a more natural impression. Above the green "wall" the heads

of the plants are depicted at various heights, either closed (usually in the lower register) or open (upper register). The most famous of such depictions is perhaps the Reed Marsh hipopotamus hunt from the 5th Dynasty tomb of Ti in Saqqara (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1987, 36). Landscapes showing larger bodies of water, such as the sea, may have different backgrounds, but the mode of representation of water itself remains unchanged – again the Punt reliefs from Deir el-Bahri are a good example. The vast Red Sea is depicted as a thin rectangle, its size lost to the viewer, with only the depictions of fish characteristic for the sea as an indication that we are not dealing with a random body of water.

Egypt, the gift of the Nile, is a vast, rather flat, desert country; mountains were therefore not the most common topic Egyptian artists had to deal with. On the contrary, in the Aegean – whether we think about Crete or the Mainland – mountainous scenery was a part of everyday life and artists had to devise ways of depicting it clearly, so that it was easily distinguishable to the viewer. Generally in the Aegean attempts at rendering such landscape would be made either from the side or from above, in a map-like mode. Maps and map-like representations were obviously known to the Egyptians, yet such compositions were not considered particularly valuable in artistic depictions[9]. The most interesting early 18th Dynasty depiction of this kind is a hunting scene from the tomb of Qenamun (TT 93). The desert landscape is shown in a map-like view and can be seen from all sides in the form of thin strips of land winding around and separating empty spaces containing desert game, some vegetation and a larger space with the hunter himself, obviously all depicted in a traditional profile view. The hills depicted in an inverted way along the side and upper parts of the scene are quite extraordinary, but it is clear that the artist was not always comfortable with this unfamiliar mode of representation, where no registers exist to introduce order to the scene. It is very unfortunate that this scene is only partially preserved (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1987, fig. 15). When it comes to a side view, it was only from the late 18th Dynasty onwards that mountains, hills and landscape began to be rendered that way, sometimes with architecture built on top, mostly in battle scenes, as will be further discussed below[10].

Going back to the Aegean landscape representations, a side-view mode of landscape depiction is for instance known from a Minoan stone vase from Zaxos known as the Sanctuary Rython, depicting a sanctuary building surrounded by high mountains (Platon 1971, 64-66). Stylized rocks in side view indicate a rough terrain in the composition, while overlapping sections of ground create an

[9] However they do appear in Egyptian art occasionally, in most cases as representations of castles or fortresses.

[10] Apart from battle and hunting scenes there is also an interesting motif dating to the 19th Dynasty and onwards, known as „the cow/bull coming out of the mountain", where the mountain is shown from the side (Liptay, forthcoming).

impression of irregular areas at varying distances. A rocky landscape shown from the side is perhaps most famously depicted in the so called "Spring Fresco" from Thera, where with a variety of colors fantastically shaped hills are shown covered with blossoming lilies[11]. The volcanic rocks are depicted in a quite unrealistic way, bending, twisting, leaning to the side, with elements protruding at unnatural angles – yet the viewer is immediately informed of where the scene takes place and has no doubts regarding the type of terrain presented to him. Another side-view mode encountered in Aegean art incorporates what we may call "inverted landscape" – previously mentioned above in case of the tomb of Qenamun – and is known from the famous Mycaean inlaid daggers (niello technique). Examples include a bronze dagger from Mycenae Grave Circle A with inlaid ornamental panels on both sides depicting galloping lions (dagger of type I variant B, dated LH I; Marinatos, Hirmer, 1976, pl. LI). The lions seem to be running in a valley indicated by mountains and hills bordering the scene from above (downwards) and below (upwards). Therefore the question which side is up and which is down in this composition is answered by the animals rather than the landscape.

When it comes to representations of the water Aegean artists developed a number of schemes, some quite basic, others much more complicated – again, as seafaring people, they had much more contact with the vastness of the sea than the Egyptians. Let us first analyze images of rivers, however, since an easier analogy may be found with the Nile. Such representations also evolved towards more complex ones. An early example comes from yet another dagger from Myceane, found in shaft grave V, depicting cats stalking prey on the banks of a river (dagger of type I variant B, dated LH I; Marinatos, Hirmer, 1976, pl. LI top). The scene has a surprisingly Egyptian feel: the water is rendered rather symbolically and can be identified as a river because of the types of fish depicted (as in the above mentioned example of the Punt reliefs). The clusters of papyrus and cats hunting ducks among them, especially the animal that has caught a duck and holds it in its paws, are also very reminiscent of similar Egyptian images. A more complex river environment was shown in the West House on Thera, where a river valley was pictured in Room 5. As opposed to geometric Egyptian depictions, the river flows more naturally in its winding bed, with plants hanging from the banks into the water. Palms clustered in groups are depicted to the sides along with some papyrus stalks and other plants of the river environment. The banks are also clustered with pebbles and rocks and below hills are depicted to put the river in a broader landscape. A yet more detailed scene comes from the famous House of Frescoes at Knossos – winding rivers bifucate into valleys separated by rocky hills, creating a complex landscape system. The rocks between the rivers surround depictions of valleys or plains with rich plant and

[11] Discovered in room Delta 2 at Akrotiri during excavations in 1970. It is dated to between 1550 and 1500 B.C., now on display at the National Archaeological Museum, Athens.

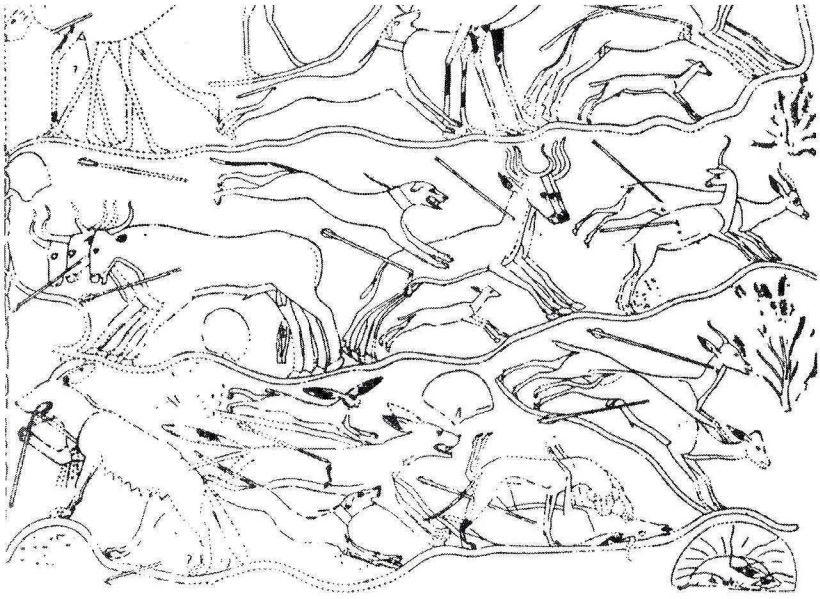

Fig 3. Redrawing of the desert hunt scene from the Tomb of Rechmire (after Groenwengen-Frankfort 1987, p.85)

animal life, while the riverbanks are indicated by pebbles, papyrus plants and other river flora (Evans 1928, pl XXII).

Sea landscapes in Aegean art also range from simpler to more complex ones, but in most cases there is a clear difference between the Egyptian and Aegean approach – in the latter case is not depicted as a thin strip, but rather as a large body of water, so that the viewer has no doubt that he looks at a vast and open sea. An example of a marine environment is depicted on a dagger from Pylos (dagger of type I variant B, dated LH II; Marinatos, Hirmer 1976, Pl. LII). The sea covers the entire decorative area, it is not outlined with borders and has no shape, yet a symbolic indication of shores or borders of some kind is present as clusters of coral depicted above and below. The water is easily identified as the sea because of the fauna inhabiting it. A completely different mode of representing the sea landscape (or rather a very complex landscape including both the sea, the coast rivers and mountains) is the famous Miniature Ship Frieze from Thera. On the left side a town is depicted surrounded by mountains with rivers winding around them. A long part of the frieze depicting water links the town with another one, also framed by mountains shown from the side. A vast area of the sea is dotted with ships moving from one town to the other, with a number of dolphins depicted between the ships. Again a common Aegean mode of depicting the sea is used here – the shores are marked with clusters of coral

reef. The frieze combines two Aegean modes of landscape composition – a side view and a map-like view, both integrated into the same scene, used side by side (the towns depicted in side view, the rivers in map view, the sea in the middle is a vast area seen as if from above, yet with ships and dolphins rendered in profile) (Morgan 1988).

PART II

Late 18th Dynasty art

The Amarna period and its aftermath is most famous for its religious innovations and new concepts introduced to the traditional canon of art laid down during the long centuries of repeating traditional motifs and themes. In comparison to the revolutionary changes in depicting the human body, animal representations from the Amarna period may sometimes seem surprisingly classic, however a closer look reveals that not only the animals themselves, but also their relation to landscape bears traces of innovations so characteristic for the times of Akhenaten. They were after all perceived - as never before in Egyptian history – through the eyes of artists looking outside the classical canon of proportions and stylistic features. A number of those innovations have been attributed to Aegean interconnections, yet tracking such influences is never a straightforward task.

Palace marsh scenes

Most examples of animal depictions in Egyptian art that we know today come from either tombs or temples and we must assume that they were created to match the religious or funerary functions of those buildings. In this aspect painted depictions of landscape and animals found in late 18th Dynasty palaces are quite unique, as they appear in the living quarters, in a domestic environment. Unfortunately, few palaces from ancient Egypt have survived, and very little is left of their decoration. The wall plaster is extremely fragile, which results in the preservation state of most of the paintings being very fragmental and unsatisfactory. A number of works of art have been destroyed completely since the day they were discovered and are now only known from descriptions or drawings made during the first excavations – as it is in case of the palace of Amenhotep III at Malkata, with only descriptions and very little material evidence remaining. Palaces in the city of Amarna are better preserved, and decorated with very similar motifs.

One of the most spectacular palace decorations is the so called "Great Pavement" found by Petrie in Room E of the Great Palace. The design consists of two rectangular ponds literally full of plants, fish and birds. Around the ponds a rich marshland is depicted with ducks flying over the papyrus thicket

and bovines jumping and bounding in a light, playful way. The dense plant life is shown in bunches, very characteristic for Amarna and frequently repeated elsewhere on the site, but the vegetation seems more robust and less organized, very dense, with plants right next to each other, partially overlapping, creating an impression of rich wilderness. The ducks are drawn in a rather realistic way flying in the air, while the bovines are depicted in a small scale. Together they create an impression of constant movement and rich life in the marshes. Both pools are separated by a path with a decoration of painted captives, the north and south enemies of Egypt. A similar design was found by Petrie in room F – the topic is basically the same, with two pools separated by a row of bound enemies. The water is teaming with rich animal and plant life and on the banks papyrus marshes are shown (Weatherhead 2007).

The so called "Green Room" in the North Palace is a continuous „frieze" depicting the natural life of the marshes. Here, the walls were adorned with spectacular paintings of birds, some diving into the marsh for prey. The room shows a unity of design, but it is different from the classic Egyptian manner, usually depicting a procession of characters continuing on the walls. Here the pattern is also continuous, but rather than being divided into scenes, it is united into a single, consistent decoration. A thin strip of water runs around the lower part of the walls, with lotus plants and grasses on the bank. From this "river" a papyrus marsh grows, thick with reeds and heavy with flower heads, often bending and overlapping. Within the thicket numerous birds are portrayed very realistically. In most cases they sit or take flight, with a noteworthy pied kingfisher diving for a catch. The most striking feature of the Green Room is the realism of the animal depictions. It is not to imply that the artist was released from the Egyptian canon completely – especially while depicting water as a thin strip (Weatherhead 2007).

The famous Aegean palace decorations, depicting animals in natural, sometimes fantastic and unrealistic surroundings, seem to have finally found a counterpart in Egypt. The Amarna palace frescoes come from exactly the same secular palace context and they also show animals in direct connection with landscape. Landscape scenes were a very common, if not dominant subject of palace decoration - at least this is the conclusion we may draw based on the surviving works. With no earlier examples of palace art in Egypt, however, it is impossible to state if any of those motifs or modes of representations is new and innovative at all – although some, like the flying gallop, seem to have a strong connection with the Aegean.

Flying gallop and the reverse twist

As stated above, Helene Kantor argued that the flying gallop motif was "a new feature imported during the Second Intermediate Period and the beginning

of the Eighteenth Dynasty" (Kantor 1999, 449). The most important feature that supported her theory, except from the fact that the idea was previously unknown in Egyptian art, is the mode of representation – the hollow backs of the animals, the flying of their hind legs into the air and the reverse twist of animals in motion[12]. The earliest example of this motif according to Kantor was the previously mentioned dagger of Ahhotep, mother of king Ahmose, decorated with a depiction of a swift lion and bull chase in a landscape setting among rocks (also hanging downwards). We now know that this is not entirely true – there are some examples of the flying gallop much earlier than the artwork cited by Kantor. As Stevenson-Smith reminds us, "it might be well to remember that the Egyptian artist occasionally attempted to represent figures in motion in very early times" (1952, 78). He then quotes two examples of the flying gallop that certainly had nothing to do with foreign influences, however none of them can be counted among the mainstream art development of its time. The first example was recorded in 1939 by the researcher himself in the tomb of Sebek-hotep at Moalla near Luxor, dating to the First Intermediate Period. The scene depicts dogs chasing hares and gazelles – both the attackers and the fleeing shown in the flying gallop – unfortunately very poorly preserved (Stevenson-Smith 1952, Fig. 6). The second example is a slightly later piece of art, dating to the Middle Kingdom, and originating from a Sudanese trading post in Kerma, far from the cultural centre of the country. It is an ivory carving of a running gazelle, intended as an inlay for some furniture. The animal is running wildly, with all four legs outstretched and tongue hanging out from the mouth (Stevenson-Smith 1952, Fig. 4).

Although not a complete novelty in Egyptian art, the flying gallop motive indeed first became noticeable during the 18th Dynasty. Among the most striking depictions of this kind, and clearly one where Aegean influences are the easiest to distinguish, are the wall paintings of Tell el-Daba in the Egyptian Delta, dating to the Thutmoside era[13]. The paintings, strongly Aegean in both materials, techniques, iconography and style, have greatly influenced theories regarding Egypto-Aegean contacts, however it is not clear whether they were created

[12] A depiction of movement where an animal reverses its direction in mid leap. An example from the Aegean comes from a silver cup discovered in Dendra near Midea in Argos (Persson 1931, pl. XVII), an example from Egypt comes from the tomb of Puyemre, no. 39 in West Thebes from the reign of Tuthmosis III – a depiction of a hound in mid-air (Davies 1922-23, vol. 1, pl. VII).

[13] Discovered by Manfred Bietak during his excavations in 1991, the paintings were originally thought to have originated from the Hyksos period. Over time theories on the chronology of the frescoes have changed greatly and now Bietak dates them to the reign of Thutmose III (circa 1479-1425 BC) (Bietak 2007). The issue of the chronological placement of the paintings is still very problematic and various authors are not of the same mind in this topic, however it is now generally assumed that they belong to the 18th Dynasty.

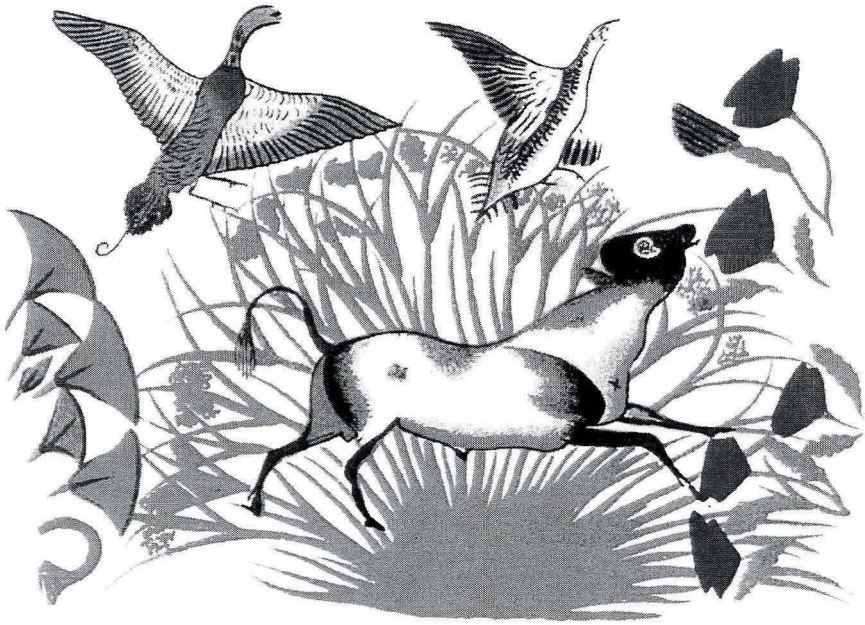

Fig 4. Redrawing of a detail of the Great Pavement in Amarna
(after Petrie 1894, pl. III)

by Aegean artists working upon the Nile or rather by Egyptians travelling in the Mediterranean sea and bringing new trends back home. The most famous frescoes known from Tell el-Daba were discovered in the so called Palace F, most were found in small pieces in a dump next to that building and they probably originally decorated the second floor of the palace. Both the size of the palatial complex and the choice of scene topics suggest that it was used by the elite. All the frescoes bear strong Aegean traces, which are most obvious in the Bull Frieze – scenes of bull leaping on the background of a maze (fully discussed in Bietak, Marinatos, Palivou 2007). Although the painting survived in a fragmentary state, the best preserved animal is shown in flying gallop, *en face*. Another fresco with this mode of representation is a hunting scene depicting men hunting in the company of dogs, with the prey including lions, leopards, goats, an antelope, deer and bull. Both the reverse twist and the flying gallop are most probably present – the first is assumed in the goat pursuit scene, however except from horn fragments the heads of the animals did not survive. The flying gallop is visible in both the predators (dogs jumping to reach the bellies of the goats) and the prey (almost all lions are depicted this way).

A number of flying gallop depictions date to the Amarna age, some of them of quite remarkable quality. The bovines depicted on the above mentioned palace frescoes are not exactly in flying gallop – their legs are not stretched far enough and sometimes the hind legs are in contact with the ground, yet the joyful prancing calves - notably a number of them, especially on the pavement in Room E, are depicted with their heads turned slightly upwards, as if looking at the sky/ sun – are so vigorous among lush, green vegetation that their movement hardly resembles static Egyptian depictions. There is one unusual feature worth noting - one of the calves in the marsh is being attacked by a lion leaping in the air with his hind paws outstretched. Unfortunately due to a poor preservation state the details of this surprising scene are unclear, but the animal appears to have been depicted in a full flying gallop position (Weatherhead 2007). Other examples of the flying gallop come from two decorative objects of exceptional quality – the famous painted chest of Tutankhamun (Egyptian Museum, Cairo, inv. no. 1189) and the less known, albeit also impressive late 18th Dynasty wooden cosmetic box with floral and animal motifs allegedly discovered in Saqqara (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv no. 49.493a-b). The first item is especially interesting when it comes to the decorations of the back panel, where among floral motifs two pairs of animals are depicted in flying gallop, in each pair an ungulate being attacked by a predator. In both cases the legs of all animals are far outstretched and in the right pair the head of the hooved animal is turned sharply towards its attacker. The so called MacGregor box, in the shape of a half cylinder with a flat lid with a round knob, is decorated with relief carvings of floral patterns (filled with green paste) and an animal chase and hunt scenes. Although partially damaged, the box still is a fine example of the flying gallop motif present both in the escaping bovines and the dogs hunting them (Stevenson-Smith 1952, Fig. 1).

Side-view and map-like landscapes

As mentioned above, Egypt is a rather flat land, and landscapes other than the desert sometimes posed problems for Egyptian artists. Mountains in side view, so popular in the Aegean, were a rare sight in Egyptian art that only began to appear during the late 18th Dynasty. As Schäfer writes, "the idea that buildings, people and things stand vertically on the ground is so firmly rooted in plain-dwellers that it often exerts an influence even when the ground is hilly" (2002, 238). The easiest place to observe such depictions would be in battle scenes, where armies can be seen attacking hilly fortresses – as there is no suitable example from Amarna, a slightly later relief depicting Sety I storming a Cannanite stronghold should be mentioned here (Schäfer 2002, Pl. 55). The hill is depicted in side view, but little is visible of the landscape as it is strewn with dead bodies and falling enemies. How unusual and awkward this landscape must have been for the Egyptian artist is proved by an error he made – one of the

soldier figures is depicted stepping over from the field of battle to the middle of the hill, as if they were both on the same plane. This is not surprising, however, as this mode of representation was a novelty upon the Nile – yet it is easily comparable to similar Aegean depictions (Stevenson Smith 1965, fig. 84). It is noteworthy that the first of such representations almost never show the landscape clearly, it is always either covered with bodies (battle scenes) or animals and plants (hunting scenes).

Many map-like representations depict objects built in the city of Amarna, especially gardens, pools and riverbank buildings. There is no single map schematic that would be repeated by Amarna artists, but, as it was common in the Aegean, such depictions would be a mix of objects rendered in profile and seen from above. Examples include pools in aerial view surrounded by trees in profile (Davies 1903, vol. 1, pl. 32), sometimes with a shaduf, but also more complicated scenes, for instance a depiction of riverbank activities divided into registers, with water in the bottom register and palace buildings in the upper register, yet with a road seen from above running from the Nile to the palace, transecting the register lines (Davies 1908, pl. 5). A very interesting composition depicting pleasure boating on a garden lake was created in the tomb of Rechmire (Visier of Tuthmosis III and Amenhotep II, 18th Dynasty, TT 100). The lake is seen in aerial view as a rectangle, with the boat and people depicted in profile. We see a few "levels" of the garden surrounding the lake in the form of larger rectangles encompassing the water, creating peculiar registers. Various plants are depicted on each level, always pointing away from the water, whether upwards, downwards or sideways. The people, on the contrary, are all depicted with their heads in the same direction, regardless of whether they are drawn above or below the lake. Curiously enough, the plants always fit within the registers, yet human figures are not limited by those boundaries and often the lower and upper body is pictured in different sections of the garden. One of the servants standing on the water level even reaches to the upper level for some fruit from a tree that grows there (Davies 1943, vol. 2, pl. 110).

When comparing basic modes of representation of animals and landscape in both cultures we always need to remember that the Aegean and Egyptian societies were very different. State domination upon every aspect of life, rigid structures and imposed order, a civilization based on writing were the aspects that strongly influenced Egyptian art, while a considerably larger freedom was part of the Aegean way of life. The approach to nature also seems very different in both cultures. While human life was always the most important topic and the centre of attention of Egyptian artists, a greater emphasis on nature is seen in the Aegean, with many depictions that lack humans completely and focus on nature in various forms, weather land or sea. The animals which appear on Minoan frescoes and seals are largely wild and sometimes supernatural, in many cases depicted in non-domestic scenes. Arthur Evans and subsequent scholars have

explained this phenomenon as an expression of interest in the natural word, yet recently a new approach was suggested by Andrew Shapland, who thinks that "the animals depicted can be seen as active participants in prestige activities such as hunting or bull-leaping rather than the passive motifs of artistic naturalists" (Shapland 2010, 109-127), therefore emphasizing the role of human-animal relations in the Minoan world. At the same time rarely can a culture be found that valued animals more than the ancient Egyptians. According to some authors no other ancient civilization fostered a closer relationship with the animal world (Germond, Livet 2001, 11) - they were personifications of the gods, beloved household companions, served as providers of both food and amusement and finally were part of ritualistic, symbolic and magical customs of the people of the Nile. Animals may have been of uttermost importance in Egypt, yet it was because of the connotations they evoked, not as part of the natural world – nature as a whole was certainly more appreciated by the Aegean people.

If we take into consideration the standardization of Egyptian art, the rules governing it and its nature – static and rigid – each innovation is always considered noteworthy. Yet conclusions regarding foreign influences need to be drawn with great caution. Some motifs – as we have seen – had emerged in Egyptian art before the era of intensive contacts with the Aegean and it is possible that they are of partially indigenous origin. As the depictions quoted in this paper and most other pieces of monumental Egyptian art we know today are mostly funerary or religious, we lack a portion of private art that had once undoubtedly adorned palaces or even rich houses. Perhaps is had always been a less rigid and more lively part of Egyptian art and – as less formalized - it was also more inclined towards innovations and open to foreign influences. At the same time the themes that influenced Egyptian artists were not chosen at random or based on individual gustoes – as Nanno Marinatos suggests on the bull-leaping example, this sport was most probably reserved for the upper classes only, and employing such topics in palace art added splendor to the owner (Marinatos 1994). Yet those assumptions may only be backed by few examples, such as paintings known from the palaces of Tell el-Daba, Malqata or Amarna (unfortunately, all roughly dating to the same period). Palace decorations are often very fragmentary (and they only represent a small section of Egyptian history), yet they show trends that are quite extraordinary – chiefly scenes of vibrant life, robust movement and motifs that with high probability may be classified as foreign influences. Setting palace art aside, some similarities to the trends in question are visible in the mural art of Theban tombs, especially in the second half of the 18th Dynasty – livelier movement, animation and original landscape depictions are present.

Tracking the changes in Egyptian art in a straight back to the Aegean is at most times very risky, but such assumptions are not without ground. They are more or less concurrent with the appearance of numerous representations of the Cretean (Keftiu) people in Egyptian art (mostly Theban tombs), beginning

from the reign of Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III. Regular trade exchanges usually also lead to mutual art fascinations and artistic influences. Some of the mutual fascinations seem obvious – the Minoan bull leaping theme on the Tell el-Daba frescoes or the Egyptian division of wall decoration into registers on the Temple Fresco at Knossos (Evans 1928, pl. XVI) - while others are much more subtle. On Egyptian grounds, if we consider the few earlier examples that have been discussed above (for instance the dagger of Ahmose) as exceptions rather than trends, the wave of possible Aegean influences is visible from a specific time period – the second half of the 18th Dynasty, during the reign of Tuthmosis III, Amenhotep II and later, during the Amarna period.

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