

Slide 4 Handout: Textual evidence for bronze age contact between the Aegean & its neighboring cultures

Though the Minoan writing system, Linear A, has not been deciphered, we can read Mycenaean Greek documents written in Linear B (a script derived from Linear A). We can also read what the Egyptian, Hittite, Mesopotamian & Luwian (LOO-vi-an = Anatolian) cultures say about their Aegean neighbors.

I. Mycenaean Greek Linear B tablets list many items from Africa & the Near East. Most of the items retain their original Anatolian, Semitic, or ancient Egyptian names:

1. African blackwood (ebony): *ku-te-so*, at Pylos
2. Blue glass paste: *ku-wa-no*, at Mycenae & Pylos
3. Boxwood: *pu-ko-so*, at Pylos
4. Copper/bronze: *ka-ko*, at Knossos, Mycenae, & Pylos.
5. Cumin: *ku-mi-no*, at Mycenae
6. Ivory: *e-re-pa*, at Knossos & Pylos
7. Gold: *ku-ru-so*, at Knossos & Pylos
8. Sesame: *sa-sa-ma*, at Mycenae
9. Terebinth resin: *ki-ta-no*, at Knossos

II. Some Linear B tablets also include ethnic adjectives:

1. Mainland Greek sites & Knossos often refer to Cyprus:

a-ra-si-jo/Alasian 'Alasian' (Cyprus was called 'Alasia')

ku-pi-ri-jo/Kyprios 'Cypriot'

2. At Knossos we find Egyptian ethnics:

one man is named *a-ku-pi-ti-jo* (*Aiguptios* = 'Egyptian', or 'Memphite'); another is called *mi-sa-ra-jo* (*Misraios* 'Egyptian')

3. At Pylos, we find Anatolian ethnics of women:

*a*64-ja*/Aswiai, 'Lydians' (in central Anatolia)

ki-ni-di-ja/Knidiai, 'Knidians' (southwestern Anatolia)

ki-si-wi-ja/Kswiai, 'Chians' (off Anatolia's western coast)

mi-ra-ti-ja/Milatiai, 'Milesians' (southwestern Anatolia)

ra-mi-ni-ja/Lamnai, 'Lemnians' (off Antaolia's western coast)

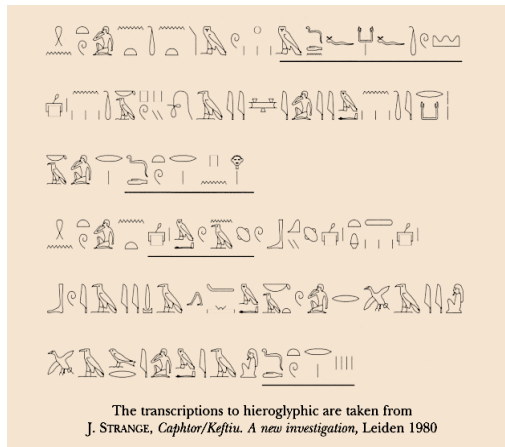
ze-pu2-ra3/Dzephurrai, 'Halikarnassians' (southwestern Anatolia)

4. At Pylos, we possibly see the ethnic 'Ethiopian':

a3-ti-jo-qo/Aithiokos = the later Greek dialect word *Aithiopos* or *Aithiops*

III. External Written Sources:

1. Egypt: Possibly as early as the 1900s BCE, and certainly by the 1600s BCE, Egyptian texts mention the *Kf.tiw* ('Keftiu,' Minoans). The *Ti-n3-iw* (Tinayu, 'Danäans,' Mycenaean Greeks) are first named around 1550 BCE. The *Papyrus Ebers*, also dated to 1550 BCE, mentions a 'Keftiu bean' (a Minoan import?) as an ingredient for a medical spell. Further, from the 1300s BCE: an Egyptian school writing tablet lists 'Keftiu' names; Amenophis III's inscription names the 'Keftiu' and 'Tinayu' in a list of nations known to Egypt; and the *London Medical papyrus* includes two healing spells in the 'Keftiu' language (!). (Kyriakidis 2002).



The transcriptions to hieroglyphic are taken from
J. STRANGE, *Caphor/Keftiu. A new investigation*, Leiden 1980

← Keftiu spells (in the Keftiu language) transcribed into Egyptian hieroglyphics.

2. Mesopotamia & the Levant: In the mid-1700s BCE: the Mesopotamian city-state Mari allots tin to an interpreter from Ugarit (a city-state on the coast of modern Syria, across from Cyprus). This interpreter represents the chief merchant of the 'Caphtorites' (Cretans), who also lives in Ugarit. Mari also notes a diplomatic gift from Caphtor (gold and lapis lazuli encrusted weapons). Simpler Minoan pottery (for Cretan crews or individual trade) can also be found throughout the Levant. But in the 1500s-1200s BCE, Aegean contact with this region largely runs through Cyprus, so Minoan & Mycenaean wares enter Canaan & the Levant from there.

3. The Hittites: The Hittites first mention the *Ahhiyawa* ('Achaeans,' Mycenaean Greeks) in the late 1400s BCE. In the early 1300s BCE, a Greek ruler named *Attarissiya* (either a lone Mycenaean king with Anatolian ties or the head of a pan-Mycenaean 'confederacy') reportedly attacks a Hittite vassal in Anatolia and raids Cyprus. The Greeks also support western Anatolian states rebelling against Hittite rule. In the mid-1300s, a Greek ruler's letter *to* the Hittites protests their seizure of islands off Anatolia's Aegean coast: his great-grandfather, who married a princess of *Assuwa* (northwestern Anatolia), received these islands as part of her dowry. Thus, as Ahhiyawan territory, the Hittites cannot 'reclaim' them after re-conquering the rebellious *Assuwa* region. In the 1200s BCE, Hittite-Mycenaean relations are more combative: king Hattusili III's letter to *Tawagalawa* (the Ahhiyawan king's brother) notes that Greeks control *Milawata* (Miletus) and support western Anatolia's rebels. But ca. 1220 BCE, king Tudhaliya IV reclaims *Milawata*, ultimately driving the Greeks from Anatolia (Beckman, Bryce, & Cline 2011).

In sum, our evidence indicates extensive interaction — economically, diplomatically, culturally, & at an individual level — between the bronze age Aegean, Egypt/Africa, the Near East, Italy, and Northern Europe. The Aegean seems to have been an important hub for trade between these regions and gift-exchange between their royalty.