

DRESSED TO IMPRESS: ARCHITECTURAL ADORNMENT AS AN EXOTIC MARKER OF ELITE IDENTITY IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN*

“An age without painting is conceivable...An age without architecture is impossible”¹
- Nikolaus Pevsner

Being “dressed to impress” is a phrase currently associated with “looking the part” in corporate culture, fashion, the club scene, and increasingly with celebrity.² A substantial number of papers in this volume have investigated the role of fashion in the form of dress, hairstyle, and jewelry in constructing identity in the Aegean. However, ancient monuments were also dressed to impress and not only deserve to come to the “party,” but as observed by Letesson and Driessen, buildings frequently served as the hosts of the party.³ As such, they were adorned with dressed ashlar blocks, wall-paintings, veneering, mason’s marks, built features, and carved elements of architectural adornment, where they played a permanent role in transmitting messages of wealth, style, power, and status.⁴ In addition to just being impressive, I have argued that architectural styles in the Bronze Age participated in what has been termed an “International Style.”⁵

The term “International Style” was formulated by William Stevenson Smith⁶ to characterize the circulation of portable prestige objects in exotic materials, rendered in a hybridized, shared repertoire of artistic motifs in the Aegean, Cyprus, and the Near East in the Late Bronze Age east Mediterranean. More recently, Marian Feldman⁷ has interpreted such objects as playing a key role in the construction of supra-elite identities, which cross-cut ethnic and geographic boundaries. Despite its awkwardness, the term “International Style” can nevertheless be extended to architecture in order to draw attention to the adornment of

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1 E. FERNIE (ed.), “Nikolaus Pevsner, An Outline of European Architecture 1943,” *Art History and Its Methods: A Critical Anthology* (1996) 199-200.

2 W.J.F. KEENAN, “Introduction: *Sartor Resartus Restored*: Dress Studies in Carlylean Perspective,” in W.J.F. KEENAN (ed.), *Dressed to Impress: Looking the Part* (2001) 1-50, esp. 31, 35.

3 Q. LETESSON and J. DRIESEN, “From ‘Party’ to ‘Ritual’ to ‘Ruin’ in Minoan Crete: The Spatial Context of Feasting,” in *DAIS* 207-216, esp. 208 where they propose that Protopalatial buildings served to facilitate “parties,” understood as random short term events, which were codified into rituals in the Neopalatial period. Palaima (these proceedings) makes reference to the Mycenaean palaces as magnificent centers, reflecting order and of housing a profusion of colors and decorative patterns that would not be seen in everyday life.

4 On the general significance of monumental architecture, see B. TRIGGER, “Monumental architecture: a thermodynamic explanation of symbolic behaviour,” *WorldArch* 22.2 (1990) 119-132. G. HULT, *Bronze Age Ashlar Masonry in the Eastern Mediterranean* (1983), goes into more detail on decorative elements than is possible here, but she does not comment on their significance. Decoration is frequently dealt with under the heading of building materials, for example, see C.W. BLEGEN and M. RAWSON, *The Palace of Nestor at Pylos I, The Buildings and Their Contents (Part 1, Text; Part 2 Illustrations)* (1966) 34-42. J.W. GRAHAM, *Palaces of Crete* (1987) 190-209 has a short chapter entitled “Decorative Features,” which discusses columns and porticoes, wall decorations, miscellaneous details, and pavements, however as discussed here, there is certainly a dissertation topic waiting to be developed.

5 L.A. HITCHCOCK, “Building Identities: Fluid Borders and an ‘International Style’ of Monumental Architecture in the Bronze Age,” in J. ANDERSON (ed.), *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence, Proceedings of the 32nd international conference of art history (CIHA), University of Melbourne, 13-18 January 2008* (2009) 165-171.

6 W. STEVENSON-SMITH, *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East: A Study of the Relationships Between the Arts of Egypt, the Aegean, and Western Asia* (1965).

7 M.H. FELDMAN, “Assur Tomb 45 and the Birth of the Assyrian Empire,” *BASOR* 343 (2006) 21-43, esp. 26.

particular Bronze and Early Iron Age buildings and architectural elements, so long as their significance is contextualized. Although monumental buildings as well as particular elements are by nature of their category, smaller in number, I hope to illustrate that there was a great potential for variability.

An important component of this style includes architectural decoration.⁸ I regard architectural decoration in the Late Bronze Age as the purposeful adornment of ashlar blocks, re-use of decorated elements as *spolia*, the sparing but purposeful use of particular or exotic types of stone, and the deployment of a variety of carved or dressed elements. These might include crowning or base elements, decorative or functional and non-functional architectural supports, veneering and pavement, stone furnishings, and other carved decoration. Although we can't always know the precise context of architectural elements, it is argued that these features were experienced differently than smaller types of adornment, in that they could be strategically used to lend a rare, exotic, and continuously visible quality to the buildings they adorned, and that they conferred additional status on the occupants and patrons of such structures through their possession of specialized knowledge that resulted in the execution of monumental buildings with exotic elements. While we are familiar with iconic elements such as the bulbous red columns depicted in Minoan wall paintings,⁹ horns of consecration,¹⁰ and the carved reliefs of the Treasury of Atreus,¹¹ I will use this paper to develop some categories and explore elements and features that have received less emphasis or have been recently discovered, which may have signified connections among elites of the east Mediterranean.

I will discuss decoration here as falling into two broad categories: primarily functional with decorative aspects and primarily decorative. In order to distinguish between style and function, I will rely on James Sackett's concept of isochrestic variation, developed for the purpose of studying stone tools. To summarize this model, the preference for a particular form, for example, a pillar over other forms such as a column, when several options will serve the same function represents isochrestic variation.¹² The recurring preference for one form over another may be seen as a possible means of distinguishing the symbolic from the purely functional and may also serve as a marker of group or elite identity.¹³

When possible, I will touch on the symbolic and ideological significance of architectural decoration, which can be partially apprehended through the embodied experience of ancient peoples. The presentation of a comprehensive catalog is beyond the scope of this article. Instead, selected examples will be presented that indicate broader east Mediterranean connections with elements found in the pre-Classical Aegean.

Categories of Architectural Decoration

Functional Elements: Orthostate construction was decorative, yet functional as they typically serve to consolidate the lower halves of mudbrick walls in order to prevent the deterioration of wall surfaces as discussed by Harmansah.¹⁴ They first appear on Crete at the Chrysolakkos tomb

8 For example, see FERNIE (*supra* n. 1) 199-200.

9 GRAHAM (*supra* n. 4) 193.

10 For example, A.L. D'AGATA, "Late Minoan Crete and Horns of Consecration: A Symbol in Action," in *EIKON* 247-255.

11 S.E. ELLIS, R.A. HIGGINS, and R. HOPE-SIMPSON, "The Façade of the Treasury of Atreus at Mycenae," *BSA* 63 (1968) 331-336.

12 J. SACKETT "Style and ethnicity in archaeology: the case for isochrestism," in M. CONKEY and C.A. HASTORF (eds), *The Uses of Style in Archaeology* (1990) 32-43.

13 For a detailed examination of Sackett's development of this scheme with further references, see S. BOWDLER and J. SMITH, "Identifying style in Australian stone artefacts: An attempt to provide a theoretical basis," *Australian Archaeology* 49 (1999) 1-6. For a critique of Sackett, see P. WIESSNER, "Style or Isochrestic Variation?: A Reply to Sackett," *American Antiquity* 50.1 (1985) 160-166. M. SHANKS and C. TILLEY, *Reconstructing Archaeology: Theory and Practice* (1987) 143-146, note that Sackett's definition lacks explanatory value, however, it provides a useful heuristic device from which to proceed to further analysis.

14 Ö. HARMANSAH, "Upright stones and building narratives: formation of a shared architectural practice in the ancient Near East," in J. CHENG and M.H. FELDMAN (eds), *Ancient Near Eastern Art in Context: Studies in Honor of Irene J. Winter by Her Students. Culture and History in the Ancient Near East* (2007) 72-75.

at Mallia, but are best known from the “palaces” at Knossos and Phaistos.¹⁵ Their appearance on Crete may be influenced by their earlier presence in Royal Palace G at Early Bronze Age Ebla in north Syria¹⁶ and their presence on Crete may have influenced Canaanite construction practices, for example at Hazor. At Hazor, the focal point of the Canaanite palace-temple located in Area A is a large hall or “throne room,” (12 x 14 m). It is composed of mud brick walls and vertical and horizontal timbers resting on well-cut ashlar orthostates,¹⁷ a tradition that begins in this region in the Late Bronze Age.¹⁸ Yon¹⁹ has attributed the use of vertical and horizontal timbers in concert with ashlar masonry in the Canaanite world (specifically Ugarit) to Cretan influence, citing the Cretan connection of Daidalos with Kothar-wa-Hasis, the Canaanite god of craftsmanship, who had a throne in Caphtor or Crete.²⁰

One example of orthostate construction that may have been purely decorative and possibly referenced Aegean and Canaanite predecessors was found in Room 850 at Philistine Ashkelon. Room 850 was a small room paved with cobblestones in the southeast corner of a larger building with hearths.²¹ What is interesting about it is that the south and west walls preserved paneling with mud bricks set vertically on their short sides to resemble orthostates. They were set against stretcher courses and supported upper courses of headers.²² This is an intriguing feature, as it is unusual for orthostates to be made of mud brick and it is possible that this was a special room, meant to reference Aegean or Canaanite prestige architecture. Interior orthostates were found in the palace-temple at Hazor and were used in the hall of the Canaanite palace at Tell Kabri, where they were robbed out.²³ Aja²⁴ believes that this room was used for sleeping or storage based on its small size. In contrast, I would argue that the pottery, which included a pyxis and a stirrup jar, indicates its special character.

Characteristics found in Minoan and Mycenaean architecture possibly inspired features in the foundation courses in 13th c. BCE buildings at Alassa- *Paliotaverna* and Kalavassos-*Ayios Dhimitrios* on Cyprus. One of them is an extraordinarily large plinth block near the entrance to the ashlar building at Alassa- *Paliotaverna* (Pl. I). It has two maneuvering²⁵ or lifting bosses left in place. At 4.92 x 0.75 m and an estimated weight of nearly three tons,²⁶ it is the largest ashlar block in the building and dwarfs the largest such block known on Crete (3.44 x 0.94 m) at

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- 15 HULT (*supra* n. 4) esp. 66-73; J.W. SHAW, “The Development of Minoan Orthostates,” *AJA* 87.2 (1983) 213-216. J.W. SHAW, “Minoan Architecture: Materials and Techniques,” *Annuario* 49 (1971) 84-91, esp. 83 interestingly suggests that they only continue in use at Knossos in the later period as they have lost their “aesthetic appeal.”
- 16 P. MATTHIAE, *Ebla: An Empire Rediscovered*. Trans. C. HOLM (1981) 68; HULT (*supra* n. 4) 38; 66-67.
- 17 A. BEN-TOR, “Notes and News: Tel Hazor, 1996,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 46.3-4 (1996) 264.
- 18 HARMANSAH (*supra* n. 14).
- 19 M. YON, “The Foreign Relations of Ugarit,” in N.C. STAMPOLIDIS and V. KARAGEORGHIS (eds), *PLUES ...Sea Routes...Interconnections in the Mediterranean 16th-6th c. BC. Proceedings of the International Symposium held at Rethymnon, Crete September 29th-October 2nd 2002* (2003) 41-52.
- 20 M.S. SMITH, *Kothar-wa-Hasis, The Ugaritic Craftsman God* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University 1985) 101-102. A connection between Crete, Ebla, and eventually, Canaan may not be a coincidence. The earliest attestation of Kothar occurs at Ebla as DINGER ka-sha-lu in the late third millennium, see M.S. SMITH, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle. Volume I. Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.1-1.2* (1994) 167. A new proposal on the cult of Daidalos at Knossos is forthcoming, see L.A. HITCHCOCK, “The Big Nowhere: A Master of Animals in the Throne Room at Knossos?,” in D.B. COUNTS and B. ARNOLD (eds), *The Master of Animals in Old World Iconography (Archaeolingua, in press)*.
- 21 L.E. STAGER, J.D. SCHLOEN, D.M. MASTER, M.D. PRESS, and A. AJA, “Part Four: Stratigraphic Overview,” in L.E. STAGER, J.D. SCHLOEN, and D. M. MASTER (eds), *Ashkelon I* (2008) 262-263, 265; figs 15.27-29; A. AJA, *Philistine Domestic Architecture in the Iron Age I* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University 2009) 109-110. I am grateful to Adam Aja for providing me with a copy of his dissertation.
- 22 AJA (*supra* n. 21) 110, 245-247, fig. 4.1.
- 23 E.H. CLINE and A. YASUR-LANDAU, “Poetry in Motion: Canaanite Rulership and Aegean Narrative Art at Tel Kabri,” in S.P. MORRIS and R. LAFFINEUR (eds), *EPOS. Reconsidering Greek Epic and Aegean Bronze Age Archaeology. Proceedings of the 11th International Aegean Conference, Los Angeles, UCLA - The J. Paul Getty Villa, 20-23 April 2006*, *Aegaeum* 28 (2007) 159.
- 24 AJA (*supra* n. 21) 109.
- 25 On Cypriot bosses in general, see G.R.H. WRIGHT, *Ancient Building in Cyprus*, 1 (1992) 371.
- 26 S. HADJISAVVAS, “Alassa Archaeological Project 1991-1993,” *RDAC* (1994) 110.

Kommos.²⁷ Frizell²⁸ has suggested that the placement of enormous blocks that exceed structural requirements as in the lintel of the “Treasury of Atreus” at Mycenae aimed at conspicuous display and enhancement of prestige linked to a period of economic expansion following the fall of Knossos. The builders of Alassa may have been using a variety of architectural symbols to promote a similar message of status and power. A cross engraved on the lifting boss of an ashlar block in the west façade of the pithos hall of Building X at Kalavassos (Pl. II) is one of two detected at the site, out of a total of seventeen marks recorded on Cyprus.²⁹ As one of several Aegean-style features at the site, it may represent specialized knowledge of the Aegean.³⁰

Fluted or channeled columns of wood in the Aegean are known from impressions preserved in the mud brick blocking of the east balustrade of the lustral basin in the Little Palace at Knossos,³¹ and in the palace at Pylos where layers of plaster around the column bases preserved the impressions of fluted wooden columns in the propylon, in the megaron surrounding the hearth of the palace, and in the entrance hall of the South Western Building.³² An engaged stone column, also with flutes is known from the Tomb of Clytemnestra.³³ Fluted columns may have been initially inspired by Egyptian architecture.³⁴ They appear as early as the 3rd Dynasty in Zoser’s Pyramid Complex, where they are believed to represent bundles of reeds or palm branches, but continue to be used in the Middle and New Kingdom, most notably in Hatshepsut’s funerary temple in Deir al Bahri.³⁵

Monolithic stone supports in the form of doorjambs and pillars of gypsum are another interesting architectural element used sparingly in Crete, occurring only at Knossos.³⁶ Evans³⁷ interpreted the stone jambs as evidence of deforestation on the island. With regard to the rare use of monolithic pillars on Crete, Shaw³⁸ more logically suggests that the use of segmented pillars was more common as they were more economical. A broken pillar section can be easily replaced whereas damage to a monolithic pillar would require the replacement of the entire member. It might be surmised that the use of monolithic jambs found at Knossos and pillars – which were preferred in Cyprus at Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios and at Kouklia-Palaepaphos – served as demonstrations of the wealth of ancient patrons and the skill of the masons and

27 SHAW (*supra* n. 15) 215.

28 B.S. FRIZELL, (1997-98) “Monumental Building at Mycenae: Its Function and Significance,” *OpAth* 22-23 (1997-98) 107, 115-116.

29 L.A. HITCHCOCK, “‘And above were costly stones, hewn according to measurement...’ Documentation of Pre-classical Ashlar Masonry in the East Mediterranean,” in K.P. FOSTER and R. LAFFINEUR (eds), *METRON. Measuring the Aegean Bronze Age. Proceedings of the 9th International Aegean Conference, New Haven, Yale University, 18-21 April 2002, Aegaeum* 24 (2003) 257-267, esp. n. 53.

30 Also, L.A. HITCHCOCK, “Cult(ural) Continuity and Regional Diversity: The Encoding of Aegean Form and Function in Late Bronze Age Cypriote Architecture,” *JPR* 13 (1999) 11-21.

31 *PM* II, 519-522, figs. 322-323, notes that the columns were made up of fifteen convex flutes; also BLEGEN and RAWSON (*supra* n. 4) 40. For other possible examples with references, see SHAW (*supra* n. 15) 137, n. 8.

32 BLEGEN and RAWSON (*supra* n. 4) 39-40, 56-57, 80, 251; ill. 48, 67, 200, 201.

33 See A.J.B. WACE, W.A. HEURTLEY, W. LAMB, L.B. HOLLAND and C.A. BOETHIUS, “The Report of the School Excavations at Mycenae, 1920-1923,” *BSA* 24 (1925) 359-360. The choice of gypsum may also be significant as discussed below.

34 Early proponents of Egyptian influence in Aegean building include J.W. GRAHAM, “The Egyptian Features at Phaistos,” *AJA* 74 (1970) 231-239 and D. PREZIOSI, *Minoan Architectural Design* (1983) 320, who suggests that Minoan builders were trained in Egypt. More recently, M.C. NELSON, “Leveling Ashlar Walls,” in *METRON* (*supra* n. 29) 269-274, has made a convincing argument that both Minoan and Mycenaean masons used the Egyptian stone cutting technique of leveling walls en masse, whereby they trimmed down the top of an entire course after it had been laid, rather than as individual blocks. *PM* II, 522-523, figs. 324-325 notes similarities between Egyptian papyrus columns and a stone lamp with pedestal from Knossos.

35 See W. STEVENSON-SMITH, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*. Rev. by W. KELLY-SIMPSON (1981) 59-60, 172-173, 226, 233; A.W. LAWRENCE, *Greek Architecture* (1973) 101; R.H. WILKINSON, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt* (2000) 66-67. Philips (conference comments) distinguishes between ribbed columns representing bundles of reeds and flutes, which she regards as being concave in profile and coming to a point. Contrast with BLEGEN and RAWSON (*supra* n. 4) 40, as well as GRAHAM (*supra* n. 4) 195-196, who regard fluting as both concave and convex, and being of Egyptian derivation.

36 SHAW (*supra* n. 15) 22, 170, figs. 15, 72.

37 *PM* II, 518-519, fig. 319, 565; also J.D.S. PENDLEBURY, *Archaeology of Crete* (1963) 188, and GRAHAM (*supra* n. 4) 175.

38 SHAW (*supra* n. 15) 171.

builders working there in the 13th c. BCE. An unusual stepped pillar from Building XII at Kalavassos (Pl. III) has its closest parallel in the West Portico at Gournia, where Soles³⁹ describes a pillar stepped in two parts, with a shaft cut from a single large block of sandstone. I have suggested that the preference for pillars over columns in Cyprus references Minoan prestige architecture.⁴⁰

Spolia in the Bronze and early Iron Age are inconsistently noted and their significance is seldom evaluated.⁴¹ The expense and manpower involved in quarrying and transporting stone certainly accounts for the use of *spolia* in many buildings, however, there is symbolic significance in its use as well. A notable example that has been well documented was the Archaic architectural fragments built into north wall of the Acropolis in Athens as a memorial of the Persian destructions in 479 BCE.⁴² Certainly there were symbolic reasons for using *spolia* in the Bronze Age as well, even if that symbolism is not always easy to apprehend.

The site of Tell el-Hesi is located in Philistia, 26 km northeast of Gaza and 7 km south of Qiryat Gat along the inner Shephelah and was the first Levantine site where Flinders Petrie applied his principles of stratigraphy in 1890.⁴³ Petrie found fragments of unusual decorative architectural elements in an early Iron Age context⁴⁴ on the east slope, since restored as a lintel slab with cavetto cornice with molding (ca. 75 cm in height) along with a block with a carved volute, that had a mortise cut into it, either used or reused as a doorjamb (ca 1.2 m high).⁴⁵ Parallels only exist for the cavetto cornice and includes up to six, fragmentary cavetto cornice blocks from the Megiddo stables.⁴⁶ None of these, however, has as much curvature or length as the Hesi fragments.⁴⁷ Wright⁴⁸ believes that the Iron Age technique of ashlar masonry in the region finds its affinities with the Aegean (although Cyprus is an equally viable candidate) and

39 J.S. SOLES, "The Gournia Palace," *AJA* 95.1 (1991) 42-44, n. 39, figs.36, 41.

40 L.A. HITCHCOCK, "Do you see a man skilful in his work? He will stand before kings': Interpreting Architectural Influences in the Bronze Age Mediterranean," *Ancient West and East* 7 (2008) esp. 30, 39, n. 113.

41 This can be contrasted with the Byzantine period where quite a bit of work has been done. For example, see A. PAPALEXANDROU, "Memory Tattered and Torn: Spolia in the Heartland of Byzantine Hellenism," in R. VAN DYKE and S.E. ALCOCK (eds), *Archaeologies of Memory* (2003) 56-80. For an important exception, see J. YOUNGER, "The Elgin Plaques from the Treasury of Atreus: Evidence for a New Reconstruction of the Façade," in W. SCHIERING (ed.), *Kolloquium zur griechischen Vorgeschichte, Mannheim, 20-22.2. 1986, Schriften des Deutschen Archäologen-Verbandes IX* (1987) 138-150. I am grateful to John Younger for this reference.

42 W.B. DINSMOOR, *The Architecture of Ancient Greece* (1975) 150.

43 W.M.F. PETRIE, *Tell El Hesi (Lachish)* (1891); V.M. FARGO, "Hesi, Tell el-," in E. STERN (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* 5 (1990) 630-634; Also J. BLAKELY, "Petrie's Pilaster Building at Tell el-Hesi," in L.E. STAGER, J.A. GREENE, and M.D. COOGAN (eds), *The Archaeology of Jordan and Beyond: Essays in Honor of James A. Sauer* (2000) 66-80, esp. 66.

44 Petrie's reconstruction has been called into question and the fragments have been assigned to City V, but this is by no means clear. BLAKELY (*supra* n. 43) esp. 74, dates the structure the blocks are associated with to the 12th c. BCE or earlier based on pottery remains, particularly a deep bowl from the floor of the building, which may either be Mycenaean IIIc:1b or a slightly earlier import based on conversations with Trude Dothan. As all are in agreement that the blocks were reused, it is probable that they date to the Late Bronze Age, see, for example, PETRIE (*supra* n. 43) 23.

45 G.R.H. WRIGHT, *Ancient Building in South Syria and Palestine* 1 (1985). 350, regards Petrie's arrangement as improbable and notes that the blocks with a volute cut in relief were found upside down, and Petrie "reverted" them, setting them above a plain dado to give the bolt-hole or mortise appropriate height.

46 G.R.H. WRIGHT, *Ancient Building in South Syria and Palestine* 2 (1985) no. 43.5 mentions just one block, while R.S. LAMON and G.M. SHIPTON (1939) 39, figs. 46-48 mention six. Four were found in the foundation trench of stable 1576 and two were found in square R5 a few meters to the west. All measure approximately 90 x 50 x 50 cm. Four have a shallow groove across the top, one has a partial groove, and one is un-grooved. Although none were found in situ, they were initially reconstructed as being used to shorten the span of the lintel for the central passage through the stable. A more recent architectural study of the stables dates them to the 8th century and omits these blocks, but makes reference to oddly shaped stones used in the original reconstruction of the lintels. See L.A. BELKIN and E.F. WHEELER, "Chapter 38. Reconstruction of the Megiddo Stables," in I. FINKELSTEIN, D. USSISHKIN and B. HAPLPERN (eds), *Megiddo IV: The 1998-2002 Seasons* (2006) esp. 669, 676.

47 PETRIE (*supra* n. 43) 22-35, esp. 23 indicates that there were multiple fragments, however the precise number is uncertain. Petrie reburied them in an undisclosed location. I am grateful to Jeff Blakely for this information.

48 WRIGHT (*supra* n. 45) 87-88.

regards the few ornamental elements associated with ashlar masonry as an “eclectic Levantine mixture.” Here, I think he misses the point in applying a modern aesthetic.⁴⁹ In this example, it may be worth re-evaluating possible Egyptian, Aegean or Cypriot influence at the site as well as the symbolic significance of referencing the past. Better understanding of these fragments, provided they can be found, may yield important clues to understanding cultural identity at the site.

Tool marks may not immediately strike one as decorative, yet when left intact, tool marks possess a certain beauty resulting from the play of light and shade on their surface.⁵⁰ More importantly, they visibly symbolize the investment of resources, that can promote the status of their patrons, and they may provide evidence of cultural interconnections. Sometimes, they serve as an important stage in the finishing process of ashlar masonry. I⁵¹ have argued that trapezoidal blocks in the north façade at Alassa had their tool marks smoothed away in contrast to ashlar blocks in much of 13th and 12th c. Cyprus as a means of referencing Minoan ashlar technique.

Studying the variation among tool marks depends on a number of factors including choice of tool, type of stone, the way it is used, the training and tradition of the stonemason, and the purpose of the tooling.⁵² While the tools themselves have been documented and the presence of chisel marks on Minoan blocks have remarked upon,⁵³ the significance of tool marks in the Bronze and Early Iron Ages has not been consistently studied or documented,⁵⁴ particularly with regard to understanding influences.⁵⁵ Catling,⁵⁶ however, has noted that Cyprus and the Aegean are closer in their tool types than in anywhere else. Weathering of blocks left exposed to the elements combined with the fact that tool marks tend to overlap further compounds the problem of studying them, however, it is possible to permanently record some of them through using brass rubbing techniques (Pl. IV).

Beautifully well-preserved tool marks were found adorning a disturbed, stone pavement uncovered in a probable 10th c. context by the University of Melbourne team in the 2009 season of the Bar-Ilan University excavations at the Philistine site of Tell es-Safi/Gath (Pl. V).⁵⁷ This is an unusual feature in Philistine architecture as worked masonry in Philistia is thus far rare before Iron Age II.⁵⁸ Their nearly pristine level of preservation provides a unique opportunity to study masonry technique. Although it is possible that they may also be *spolia* from an earlier weight or basin, a careful comparison with tool marks in Cyprus and the Aegean may help to establish important linkages with the west, and shed new light on Philistine identity.

Purely Decorative Elements

Decorative, but non-functional elements carved from stone took a variety of forms in the Late Bronze Age, some of them serving as interior furnishings.⁵⁹ As noted above, purely

49 Indeed, PETRIE (*supra* n. 43) 23 believed they were the most important objects found at Hesi.

50 NELSON (*supra* n. 34) 273, n. 24 briefly notes their decorative qualities.

51 HITCHCOCK (*supra* n. 51) 262, LIIIa and b.

52 D.P.S. PEACOCK, *The Archaeology of Stone: A Report for English Heritage* (1998) 24.

53 SHAW (*supra* n. 15) 60-74, figs. 48-60. Scale and detail measurements are only provided for the tools, but not the tool marks.

54 But see, H.W. CATLING, *Cypriote Bronze Work in the Mycenaean World* (1964); PEACOCK (*supra* n. 52) 23-24; Y. SHILOH, *The Proto-Aeolic Capital and Israelite Ashlar Masonry* (*Qedem* 11, 1979) 61, 66; WRIGHT (*supra* n. 25) 367-371, figs. 216, 219, 220; G.R.H. WRIGHT, “Schools of Masonry in Bronze Age Cyprus,” in *Proceedings of the Third Cyprological Congress, Nicosia, 16-20 April 1996* (2000) 399-422.

55 For an exception see NELSON (*supra* n. 34).

56 CATLING (*supra* n. 54) 108.

57 For a brief overview of Tell es-Safi/Gath and its Aegean connections, see A.M. MAEIR, “Aegean Feasting and other Indo-European Elements in the Philistine Household,” in *DAIS* (*supra* n. 3) 347-352. I am grateful to Aren Maeir for permission to reproduce the pavement.

58 See E.D. OREN, “Ashlar Masonry in the Western Negev in the Iron Age,” *EI* 23 (1992) 94-105, 149*-150*, esp. 150*. The rarity of ashlar masonry in early Philistine architecture may serve as one piece of evidence against Aegean and Cypriot influence in the region, rendering any examples as being of the greatest importance.

59 Nikolaus Pevsner studied furnishings in connection with architecture as discussed by FERNIE (*supra* n. 1).

decorative supports were rare. However, Evans documented carved capitals from Knossos,⁶⁰ and a rare pair of engaged colonettes decorated the ceremonial hall at Alassa-*Paliotaverna*, where they probably framed the doorway leading from the hall to the rest of the building.⁶¹ They are among a host of unique decorative features in the monumental building at Alassa.

Gypsum veneering and other features rendered in gypsum seem to have been the preferred form of decoration over painted wall-plaster at Hagia Triada, Phaistos, Nirou Chani, and Pyrgos-Myrtos, a technique that was used earlier in Egypt.⁶² Rather than seeing these buildings as lacking in wall paintings, they may have been referencing Knossos, where there was a lavish use of enormous gypsum blocks.⁶³ MacGillivray has in turn suggested that the Knossians were referencing the Egyptians, referring to Knossos as the “crystal palace” based on the prevalent display of gleaming, decorative gypsum.⁶⁴ Gypsum pavement from Crete⁶⁵ was used sparingly and selectively at Mycenae and Tiryns where it may be referencing the Minoans and advertising Mycenaean power, but such practices were not limited to the Mycenaean world. Its use in combination with white limestone is well documented in the basin building at Hala Sultan Tekke.⁶⁶ Less well-known is a fallen gypsum slab from Building X at Kalavassos-*Ayios Dhimitrios* (Pl. VI), which may have served as veneering, and as an additional decorative reference to Minoan Crete.

A stone seat found in the forecourt (room 19) of Building C, Area 8 west at Hala Sultan Tekke⁶⁷ has a number of decorative features in common with Minoan stone seats. As in the throne at Knossos, the top surface appears to be molded to fit human contours. Though solid, the front depicts a shallow central triangular depression that creates the effect of articulating triangular chair legs to either side. These triangular “legs” are incised with a series of vertical lines. The two closest Minoan examples are the poros limestone seat from Katsamba⁶⁸ and the bottom half of the gypsum throne from the “Throne Room” at Knossos, which is separate from the back piece as detailed by Younger.⁶⁹

A socketed stand found on Cyprus is treated as a sub-category of stepped blocks.⁷⁰ It is one of nine stepped blocks known from Hala Sultan Tekke. The stand, (F 1637) was found in a secondary context in the west part of Area 8.⁷¹ It includes three steps and the lowest part of the bottom step was unfinished, indicating that it was probably set into the ground, serving as a base. A socket was cut through the block for inserting something,⁷² possibly a post or cult emblem as suggested for pyramidal stands on Crete, based on the Hagia Triada sarcophagus.

60 For example, *PM* II, 814-815, suppl. Pl. 30a.

61 Only one of them was preserved well enough to photograph; see HITCHCOCK (*supra* n. 51) 263, LIVc and d.

62 It occurs in more sparing use elsewhere, as detailed by S. CHLOUVERAKI, “Exploitation of Gypsum in Minoan Crete,” in L. LAZZARINI (ed.), *Interdisciplinary Studies on Ancient Stone, Proceedings of the 6th International Conference of ASMOSIA, Venice 15-18 June 2000* (2002) 25-33, esp. 28; also SHAW (*supra* n. 15) 23. On its use in Egypt, see HULT (*supra* n. 4) 79.

63 Knossian gypsum was quarried from the nearby Gypsadhes Hill, while another quarry near Hagia Triada is noted by GRAHAM (*supra* n. 4) 143-144, fig. 125.

64 J.A. MACGILLIVRAY, “Sir Arthur Evans’ Minoans and the Egyptian Renaissance of the New Kingdom,” in A. KARETSOU (ed.), *Crete-Egypt: Three Millennia of Cultural Connections* (2000) 152. The author is grateful to Dr. MacGillivray for this reference. On the decorative use of gypsum on Crete, see CHLOUVERAKI (*supra* n. 62).

65 N.H. GALE, H.C. EINFALT, H.W. HUBBERTEN, and R.E. JONES, “The Sources of Mycenaean Gypsum,” *Journal of Archaeological Science* (1988) 15: 57-72.

66 G. HULT, *Hala Sultan Tekke* 4. (1978) 27; 41, figs. 77-79.

67 P. ÅSTRÖM, *Hala Sultan Tekke* 10. (1998) 52-53, esp. figs. 87-88.

68 J. YOUNGER, “The Iconography of Rulership: A Conspectus,” in *Ruler*, esp. 190, no. 253, pl. 71f.

69 YOUNGER (*supra* n. 68) 191, no. 262, pl. 74; also *PM* IV, 915-919, figs. 887, 889-893.

70 As discussed in HULT (*supra* n. 4) 76-77; and in more detail by I. JACOBSSON, “Stepped ‘bases’ from Hala Sultan Tekke,” in T. PAPADOPOULOS and S. XATSISTELLI (eds), *Proceedings of the Second Cyprological Congress* (1985) 185-190.

71 At least four stepped blocks, all carved from limestone, are reported from Hala Sultan Tekke. Only two contained sockets, although the second one is fragmentary, see P. ÅSTRÖM, “Stepped Blocks from Hala Sultan Tekke,” *RDAC* (1984) 66; JACOBSSON (*supra* n. 70); HULT (*supra* n. 4) 77.

72 JACOBSSON (*supra* n. 70) 186, fig. 8.

Åström⁷³ treated all stepped blocks as identical, suggesting they may have supported cult pillars associated with doorways. If they held cult emblems, the socketed stands from Hala Sultan Tekke may be seen as comparable to the pyramidal stone stands found in Minoan buildings, although Minoan stands have finished bases suggesting greater portability.

Conclusions: In conclusion, architectural adornment was a practice that circulated around the east Mediterranean, with the Minoans emulating Egypt and the Levant, and in turn being emulated by the Mycenaeans, the Cypriots, and the peoples of the Levant – both Canaanites and later Philistines, who likely also drew on influences from Egypt. Taken in isolation, few of these examples is necessarily convincing of interconnections, however as part of a larger constellation of features they become more convincing. Fifty to one-hundred years ago, such observations might have been viewed as cultural diffusion: less-developed cultures passively receiving the wisdom of advanced and more highly developed cultures. A reaction to this simplistic approach, influenced by processual (I hesitate to any longer call it “New”) archaeology of the 1960’s was to study cultures in isolation,⁷⁴ a practice which neglects the realities of sea trade and its accompanying cultural exchanges, a practice that shrank maritime space and brought ancient peoples together. A more nuanced approach is to view the internationalism of the east Mediterranean as a conscious, knowledgeable, and sparing appropriation and circulation of goods and symbols. The purpose of such appropriations was not the passive or slavish imitation of a superior culture by an inferior one. Rather, it may represent an ideology to confer or re-enforce power and prestige through the manipulation of exotic symbolism⁷⁵ as well as strategies to forge cross-cultural links along with links with the past.⁷⁶ Previous studies of the internationalism of the Mediterranean Bronze Age have emphasized portable and easily circulated prestige goods, however, it is proposed here that internationalism was also promoted in the construction of prestige architecture and the strategic deployment of specialized architectural symbols.

Louise A. HITCHCOCK

73 ÅSTRÖM (*supra* n. 71) 66, 68. 1984.

74 On the “New” archaeology, see L. BINFORD, *An Archaeological Perspective* (1972); for the classic study of the Aegean, see C. RENFREW, *The Emergence of Civilization* (1972).

75 For example, C.S. COLBURN, “Exotica and the Early Minoan Elite: Eastern Imports in Prepalatial Crete,” *AJA* 112.1 (2008) 203-224; M.W. HELMS, *Ulysses’ sail: an ethnographic odyssey of power, knowledge, and geographical distance* (1988); M.H. FELDMAN, “Luxurious Forms: Redefining a Mediterranean ‘International Style,’ ca. 1400-1200 B.C.E.,” *Art Bulletin* 84.1 (2002) 6-27.

76 As discussed by I. SCHOEP, “Social and Political Organization on Crete in the Proto-Palatial Period: The Case of Middle Minoan II Malia,” *JMA* 15.1 (2002) 101-132, esp. 121.

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