

DECONSTRUCTING CULTURAL HEGEMONY OF THE LATE BRONZE AGE  
INTERNATIONALISM:  
THE AEGYPTO-AEGEAN CONTACT UNDER THE NEW KINGDOM IMPERIALISM

By

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## **Abstract:**

This research pays some attention to the cultural contact, economic commerce, and diplomatic relation between Egypt and the Aegeans from the entire Bronze Age phase by interpreting the archaeological evidence from both Middle Kingdom, Second intermediary, and New Kingdom Egypt and Aegean sites. The cultural, economic, and diplomatic contact between Egypt and the Aegean world seems to be a great part of systematic networks in the Bronze Age Mediterranean. The trade, tributary alignment, and the royal marriage between Egypt and Minoan for diplomatic purposes were all fruitions of international relationships in the Eastern Mediterranean world. The power wrestling of these different ancient superpowers boosted the prosperity of the commercial economy and ideological exchanges in some unexpected way, and the influences of these grandiose historic contexts had influenced some periphery parts of the existing world at that time. The archaeological evidence from the Aswan, Avaris-Pirameses complex, el-lisht, Kahun, and Abydos will be intentionally collected to demonstrate the trajectory of interregional contacts between Egypt and the Aegeans under the hegemonial power structure. In this thesis, I will coordinate the two regional studies under one theoretical approach. I viewed the Neo-Marxism theory as a juncture for analyzing ancient IR and ancient political economy. I used Neo-Gramscian theory to deconstruct the apparatus of Egypt-centric hegemony.

## **Introduction:**

The history of Aegypto-Aegean contact can be traced from the beginning of the Early Bronze Age (3000 BC-2500 BC). The highly connected Eastern Mediterranean world nourished economic, cultural, and diplomatic contacts between its surrounding polities. In Egypt after the Second Intermediate Period (1700 BC), the local indigenous power from the south, known as the 17th Dynasty, overthrew the Asiatic rulers and liberated lower Egypt, initiating the 18th Dynasty (Wallis Budge 1895). Egypt's indigenous Dynasty's reunification promoted a new golden age and a new imperial system, which was based on Egypt's military power.

According to the Greek writer Thucydides, the Minoans had also achieved a Thalassocracy before the Trojan War (Thucydides, 1.4). Archaeologists have found some corroborating evidence for this in the form of ceramics, diplomatic letters, epigraphy, and prestige artifact. The neo-palatial system was comprehensively established and flourished at Knossos. Egyptian and Aegean social complexity reached a zenith around the 18th Dynasty in Egypt (1700-1600BC). The simultaneousness of these two powerful states established the platform for receiving more complicated diplomatic activities based on economic, military, and cultural cooperation.

In this thesis, I will apply an Egypto-centric perspective to scrutinize Egyptian internationalism by using Gramsci's concept of hegemony. How did intricate diplomatic relationships in eastern Mediterranean polities motivate their state-level cultural

interactions? What could we learn from the existing archaeological evidence? How can we use archaeological evidence to associate relevant artifacts to a particular historical event or historical background? The power structures of both these complex societies benefited from strengthening international commerce. How did this reciprocal power structure facilitate interconnections between localized cultural formation and prestige/civic identity construction based on exoticism? How did Egyptian Imperialism influence cultural hegemony elsewhere in the Late Bronze Age, and how did this powerful apparatus affect the rise and fall of internationalism? These are the central issues I will discuss.

I will divide the thesis into two separate chapters. The first chapter will briefly review the literary evidence and archaeological evidence associated with Aegypto-Aegean contacts from the Egypt-centric view. This chapter will mainly provide substantiated evidence from traditional scholarship; the review of prior work will solidify my argument about Egypt-centric internationalism. I will utilize Neo-Marxist and postmodernist theory to examine Imperialism and hegemony in Egypt and the Aegean. The second chapter will mainly focus on how the Neo-Gramscian approach is applied to understand ancient international relations.

In the first chapter, I will demonstrate the literary and archaeological evidence in chronological order. When Sir. Arthur Evans excavated Minoan sites such as Knossos, the discussion about the Aegypto-Aegean contacts had already attracted much scholarly

attention in the West. Hence, the preceding western scholars had conducted dozens of research projects based on their intellectual curiosity about the Aegypto-Aegean contacts, mainly due to their historical background; their interpretations somehow misunderstood Aegypto-Aegean relations. Arthur Evans applied typological methods to construct the timeline between the Aegypto-Aegean contacts based on pottery. He inaccurately outlined the Minoan culture as a cultural production of Egyptian civilization, and his problematic interpretation of the cultural inheritance between Egypt and Minoan is now considered an unfortunate misrepresentation by his reliance on diffusionism (Evans 1925). However, his studies opened a new perspective for subsequent scholars to think about the potential impulses of cultural interactions between Egypt and the Aegean. In recent decades, Classical Archaeologists and Egyptologists have made considerable progress in the relevant subjects about the Aegypto-Aegean relations. The archaeological evidence from the 1960s-1980s proves the long historic nature of Aegypto-Minoan contacts. Significant amounts of Minoan and Minoanized pottery were excavated from Lisht, Abydos, Avaris, and el-Hagara, heavily looted burial sites in Egypt. The fact that Egyptians utilized Minoan artifacts could indicate the enfranchisement of powerful elites and non-elite commoners from the interpretation of the funereal context; this enfranchise circumstance was deeply associated with socio political affiliation under the Egyptian power structure during different periods (Barrett 2009; Kemp et al. 1980; Rosalie 1996). In the mid-1990s, the excavation in Avaris or Tell-el-Da'ba led Aegypto-Aegean contact's research into an exciting discussion about the multicultural connections under the age of Egyptian Imperialism. At this site, fragments of Minoan fresco paintings were found in the palace F complex. Palace F in the Tell-el-Dab'a/Avaris was built in an

interesting geopolitical position, the capital of Non-Egyptian Hyksos rulers. Palace F was built in the Thutmose period (1600 BC-1500 BC), and Palace F was painted with Minoanized frescoes (Bietak 2005). Bietak suggests Palace F was used as a summer house for a Minoan princess married to the Egyptian pharaoh during the early Eighteenth Dynasty. The iconographic evidence from fresco paintings indicates that Minoan artisans, who worked in the palatial system's hearth, were hired by Egyptian royalty to decorate their palatial complex. A series of archaeological evidence infers the potential diplomatic, cultural, and economic interactions between the Egyptian and Aegean arranged in a state-level with elite contexts (Bietak 2005; Bietak et al. 2002; Barret 2009).

The archaeological records from the 1960s to 1990s reveal the evolution of bilateral cultural exchange in the Eastern Mediterranean world, and this evolutionary trajectory reveals the significance of the protection of stable authoritarian polities in the Eastern Mediterranean. The presence of despotic power was the basis of state-level diplomacy and commerce, and the ascent and decline of the imperial system was the main factor for determining the sustainability of internationalism between Egypt and the Aegean (Wengrow 2007). The spontaneous attribute of long-distance exchange in the early Middle Bronze Age had developed into tributary reciprocity from the royal elite commands, which had substantially depended on the establishment of stable polities. The stable administrative system was an essential power basis for maintaining a commendatory economy and diplomatic relationship. Imported goods and the material culture were just the projections of internationalism in the Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean world. The development of the social organization level had promoted the

cultural contacts between Aegean and Egypt into a hybrid elites' culture. The localized utility and reidentification of exotic artifacts are affiliated with the new recognition of exoticism's accessibility and the legitimacy of power in the indigenous contexts. The symbolism of multicultural contacts indexed the meanings of a power sphere for the non-elite and elite recipients in the grander norm of international networks.

In the second chapter, I will analyze the international relations and the cultural contacts between Egypt and the Aegeans with a Neo-Marxism approach, and I will explore the historical and present significance of this unique part of history. The imperialistic attribute of Aegypto-Aegean contacts makes Gramscian theory in international relations (IR) an elaborate theoretical approach. Traditional Gramscian theory tends to be applied in analyzing class struggle, which is based on the cultural domination of ruling classes to enfranchise their systematic legitimacy (Gramsci and Henderson 1998). Robert Cox (1983) and Worth Owen (2011) mentions that Neo-Gramscian IR theory could be applied to the study of complex international relations. The concept of "world order" is an elaborate term to understand the class struggle between various apparatuses, the predominance of one powerful government apparatus, and subordinate polities' subjugation. It is suitable to analyze the Egypt-centric order in the Late Bronze Age. An imperial order's cultural hegemony could engage a predominance role to the surrounding polities; the archaeological remains of certain exchanged artifacts could be viewed as a vestige of a sophisticated international subordinate system. There is a stereotypical narrative about Egyptian and Aegean relations, which sees Aegean polities as a subordinated political apparatus of Egyptian imperial structure or the part of the

Egyptian imperial tributary system (Evans 1925). But this clichéd concept is an unsubstantiated hypothesis for the complicated world system in the LBA Eastern Mediterranean. Renfrew noticed that there was no substantial evidence about the existence of migrated foreign population, and he criticized Evans' diffusionist theory and proclaimed his "locally process" theory about Aegean state formation (Renfrew 1972, 52). The social complexity of the Aegean society was independently developed by human adaptation of the local environment. The redistribution of subsistence commodities boosted social complexity in Bronze Age Greece (Renfrew 1972, 298). Hence, the interaction between Egypt and the Aegean was a spontaneous and simultaneous phenomenon that accompanied the development of commodity redistribution. The archaeological evidence from Avaris and the iconographical evidence from Thebes indicated reciprocal diplomatic activity between Egypt and Aegean consented to equal status with political reverence. A hegemonic authoritarian polity like Egypt could not construct a comprehensive administration in the periphery of the LBA world system, deficient in explaining archaic state interaction under the hegemonic empire without any effective administrative praxis. This statement might explain the limited number of artifacts and literary evidence that related to Aegypto-Aegean contacts.

The rareness of textual evidence about trading and reciprocity between Late Minoans and Egyptians from royal elite contexts clouds details of its bilateral connection. The limited presence of Minoan fresco painting and Egyptian diplomatic records suggests the multiple power centers on the Eastern Mediterranean (Schon 2007). Neo-Gramscian IR theory could explain the potential impulse for embedding cultural diffusion within that skeptical view without direct hegemonic enfranchisement. The discussion about imperial

Egypt and the Aegean's diplomatic relations is a contentious debate between Neo-Marxism theory and traditional diffusionist theory. I postulate that new archaeological theory will help explain archaic state interaction with a comprehensive understanding of hegemonic elements during the Late Bronze Age.

## Chapter 1

This chapter will mainly explore the Aegypto-Aegean contact using Egyptian archaeological evidence presented in chronological order. I collect the relevant archaeological evidence from ceramics, iconography, and jewelry to set up a database of Aegypto-Aegean contacts. Chapter 1 will be divided into three parts, including the artifact charts, description of artifact contexts, and a preliminary interpretation. The artifact charts are compiled from antecedent literature. I will meticulously scrutinize the trajectory of limited Minoan evidence and Mycenaean evidence from Egyptian sites to systematically reconstruct the potential Aegypto-Aegean relationship under the Egypt-centric world system. I will coordinate this collective sampling with my theoretical approach in the second chapter to connect the database with a likely explanation.

Table 1: Catalog of Aegean style artifacts in Egypt sites

Site	Artifacts	Chronology	Contexts	Sources
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Qubbet-el-Hawa, Tomb 88	Minoanized Kamares vase decorated with floral protuberance.	MMI-MMII, First Intermediate period. 9 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty	Found in the plundered elite burial, associated with southern nomarchy.	(Barrett 2009; Kemp et al. 1980)
el-Tod treasure	Silver cups with cotton-reel handles. Imitating the shape of Minoan pottery.	EMIII-MMI, 12 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Mentuhotep II	Found in the basement of Tod temple near the Luxor region. Scholars hold speculative assumptions about the Aegean provenance of El-Tod treasure.	(Dardaillon 2008 ; Maxwell-Hyslop 1995 ; Kemp et al. 1980)
Abydos Tomb 416	Kamares spouted jar with floral decoration	MMII, reign of Senusret II	Elite burial context.	(Barrett 2009; Kemp et al. 1980)

el-Haraga	More than 20 pieces of Middle Minoan Kamares sherds.	MMII-MMIII 12 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Senusret II	Domestic context, settlement debris.	(Barrett 2009; Kemp et al. 1980)
el-Lisht	6 Kamares sherds; 2 pieces are local imitations, and 4 pieces are Middle Minoan imports.	MMII-MMIII 12 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Amenemhat I ( <i>terminus post quem</i> )	Found in plundered cemetery contexts, but possibly belong to domestic contexts from upper stratum.	(Barrett 2009; Kemp et al. 1980)

<p>Tell-el-Da'ba (Avaris)</p>	<p>Golden bilateral Pendant.</p>	<p>MMII, Egyptian 13<sup>th</sup> Dynasty</p>	<p>Found in the heavily plundered elite burial in Avaris. The pendant is decorated with a bilateral animal motif; the Malia in Crete is possible provenance of the pendant.</p>	<p>(Walberg 1991)</p>
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Tell-el-Dab'a	Several Kamares sherds, few post-Kamares sherds	Kamares fragments: MMIIB Egyptian 13 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty Post-Kamares sherd: MMIIIA/B	Kamares fragments are found in the 13 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty palatial complex. Post-Kamares: Undefined, in stratified stratum	(Barrett 2009; Walberg 1991)
Tell-el-Dab'a	Minoanized fresco fragments from Palace F, with bull leaping theme  One Aegean imported Rhyton	LMI Mid-18 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty Thutmose Period	Found near the palatial complex. Palatial F supposedly served as the house of Haram.	(Bietak 2005, 2010 ; Bietak et al. 2012 ; Marinatos 2012)

<p>Thebes, Tomb of Rekhmire TT100</p>	<p>Fresco with depiction of Aegean people and Aegean prestigious tributes. There is an inscription about the king of Keftiu in the chamber wall. (Aegean)</p>	<p>LMI  Mid-18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Thutmose Period</p>	<p>Elite burial context, the tomb of Vizier during the reign of Thutmose III</p>	<p>(Cline 1994)</p>
<p>Thebes, tomb of Senmut</p>	<p>Frescos with depiction of Aegean people</p>	<p>LMI/LHI  Mid-18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Hatshepsut</p>	<p>Elite burial context, the tomb of Vizier to Hatshepsut.</p>	<p>(Cline 1994; Wengrow 2007)</p>
<p>Kom el Hetan</p>	<p>“Aegean list”, a topographical list</p>	<p>LMI/LHI  18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Reign of Amenhotep III</p>	<p>Inscribed on the statue base at Amenhotep III mortuary temple.</p>	<p>(Cline 1994; Cline and Stannish 2011)</p>

Amarna	Papyrus fragment with artistic depiction of Mycenaean and LHIIIA2 stirrup jar	LHIII 18 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty Reign of Amenhotep III or Akhenaten.	Domestic context, they were found accompanied in the House of the King's sculptor.	(Cline 1994)
Uluburun shipwreck	18 stirrup jars from Late Helladic/Late Minoan context	Amarna Period, Late Helladic/Late Minoan (LH/LM) IIIA2	Found in the Uluburun shipwreck, they were considered as imported cargos.	(Zangani 2016)
Zawiyet Umm el- Rakham	4 completed Aegean transport stirrup jars	LMII/LHII- LMIII/LHIII 19 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty	Found in the coastal harbor, they were considered as imported cargo.	(Ben-Shlomo et al. 2011)

Tell-el-Da'ba	Late Helladic arrow tips	LHIIIB 19 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty- 20 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty, Rameses period	Arrow heads were found in Palace G. Possibly were imported from Pylos.	(Bietak 2010; Bietak et al. 2012)
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The earliest example of an imported Minoan luxurious artifact was found in the Qubbet-el-Hawa, Tomb 88. A Kamares vase with applique (Tomb 88, No.323) had a distinctive shape formed with other local provenanced pottery sherds. No.323 is a highly decorated vase with a flower protuberance. No.323 is a Kamares Krater vase, which supposedly is the Egyptian imitation of the Minoan Kamares vase (Barrett 2009). Because Tomb 88 was reused multiple times during the Middle Bronze Age, the scarab seal from Tomb 88 has pronounced features of the eleventh Dynasty decoration style; archaeologists used the typological dating method to approach the chronology of this tomb. The archeologists dated the tomb and found that its age was between the late First Intermediate Period to the early Middle Kingdom during the Eleventh Dynasty (when upper Egypt was occupied by the Intef family) (Kemp et al. 1980). Kemp suggested that vase No.323 paralleled the Middle Minoan chronology (MMI) by applying their relative dating approach. The grave goods suggested that this tomb was somehow related to the local Nomarch in the late First Intermediate Period.

The el-Tod treasure was found in the basement of the Tod temple near Luxor. Four bronze chests containing jewelry and silver bowls were found in the Tod temple's basement near the Grand Theban region. Scholars have speculated about the Aegean provenance of el-Tod treasure. Kemp noticed that the one-handle silver bowl might be of Aegean origin (Kemp et al. 1980). Thus, he believed that the silver vessels from el-Tod treasure might imitate Minoan or Minoanized pottery's shapes. Although Arthur Evans thought that the one handle silver cup had an anticipatory element of the Mycenaean Vapheio cup, he did not believe those artifacts were made in the Aegean world. Arthur Evans thought the el-Tod treasures were of Anatolian provenance, but el-Tod treasure type artifacts might influence the similar type of Aegean vase (Kemp et al. 1980). Yet later scholars from the 1990s convince that el-Tod treasure might be imported from central Anatolia by applying the typological method because the metal vase with the same whirling ornamentation in the el-Tod's silver cup was also found in the early Hittite site, Alaca. (Maxwell-Hyslop 1995). French scholars held a doubtful attitude toward the provenance of exotic silver bowls from el-Tod treasure. French scholars applied the metallurgic method to check the potential origin of el-Tod's "Aegean cup," then, they were convinced that Anatolia might be the exact provenance of silver cups from el-Tod treasure (Dardaillon 2008).

One Kamares spouted jar with floral decoration was found in the grave goods of shaft grave burial 416 at Abydos. The pottery from the Abydos 416 had shared its unique morphology with Middle Minoan style pottery. (Kemp et al. 1980) The burial had preserved seals with the cartouche of Ammenehat III and Senusret III during the golden

age of the Middle Kingdom, which paralleled the MMII phase. Abydos 416 possibly belonged to the local bureaucratic families. This foreign style of pottery seemed to be an affordable offering for these middle-class families in Egypt, despite being an elite form on Crete (Kemp et al. 1980).

Middle Minoan sherds from site el-Haraga were mainly excavated in domestic contexts, which also supports the above interpretation. There are more than 20 pieces of Middle Minoan Kamares sherds (MMII-MMIII 12th Dynasty) found on this site. Half of the imported Middle Minoan sherds and Minoanized pottery sherds were found in the North rubbish heap during the 1898 excavation, and the other half of the sherds were found in the workingman village where the center of Kahun city was located (Kemp et al. 1980). These Minoan sherds perhaps have a close association with Kahun craftsmen's workshops. David Rosalie suggested that Kahun had a presence of a foreign population, which had possibly introduced the Minoanized architectural and artistic ideology to the indigenous craftsmanship (Rosalie 1996).

There were six pieces of Kamares sherds found in the el-Lisht; two pieces are local imitations, and four are Middle Minoan imports (Kemp et al. 1980). At el-Lisht, most of the pottery found without lids have shown some Minoan characteristics such as Minoan loop handle type, distinct dark slip, and Kamares decorative repertoire (Kemp et al. 1980). Most of this pottery was considered locally made Minoanized pottery, and many of this pottery was wheel-made (Kemp et al. 1980). The sherds were found in

plundered 12th Dynasty cemetery contexts during Amenemhat I's reign, but Kemp suggested that those sherds possibly belong to 22nd Dynasty domestic contexts from the upper stratum. Barrett believed that Middle Minoan pottery from the early Middle Kingdom cemetery context might have been reused in 22nd Dynasty domestic contexts (Barrett 2009).

In the 1980s-1990s, archaeologists found a luxurious artifact from the burial site in Tell-el-Da'ba (Avaris). According to Walberg, the golden pendant was recovered in the plundered palace burial in the Tell-el-Da'ba (Walberg 1991). The pendant itself had unfortunately lost its context by intensive looting. The tomb supposedly belongs to the period between the 12th and 13th Dynasties, before the invasion of Hyksos, which was also chronically paralleled to the MMII period in the Aegean. The golden pendant had used the same granulation technique as in the Middle Minoan gold bee pendant from Chrysolakkos at Mallia. On the other hand, the antithetic spiral motif seems to be common in the Minoan and later golden jewelry in LHIIIA shaft grave III in the Grave Circle A. The stylistic similarity in art and the metallurgical similarity in technology suggest an Aegean origin for this pendant. Walberg suggested that Malia in Crete is possible for the provenance of the pendant (Walberg 1991).

Several Kamares sherds and a few post-Kamares sherds were found at Tell-el-Da'ba, and the MMIIIB Kamares fragments are found in the 13th Dynasty palatial complex (Barrett 2009; Walberg 1991). Post-Kamares sherds were found in undefined

status from the stratified stratum. Because those post-Kamares sherds belong to the MMIIIA/B phase from a typological perspective, Walberg believed those post-Kamares sherds were found in the 19th-21st Dynasty domestic context. Most of the MMIII sherds that were dated for chronology by Walberg belonged to non-elite contexts. The sherds were often found in the historic garbage deposition layer (Walberg 1991). Also, many of the pots that the sherds eventually came from were possibly reused for many generations over a long period.

Until the end of the Middle Kingdom, Minoan Kamares pottery was the most common Aegean imported good recovered from Egyptian sites. The Minoan/Minoanized pottery sherds from Qubbet-el-Hawa, Tell-el Da'ba, and el-Haraga, considered exotic luxuries or replicas of exoticism, were associated with the Egyptian noble burial contexts. This general pattern indicates that the commercial exchange between Egypt and Minoan was mainly on the elite level. The limited jewelry evidence and plenty of luxurious pottery evidence suggest that the primary focus of Minoan imports was designated for establishing elites' prestigious identity. Although the Kamares vases had typically been associated with the Minoan elite's burial context at Crete, some Minoan/Minoanized Kamares pottery were first found in later stratum from Egyptian domestic contexts (20th-21st Dynasty) instead of being found in situ. The cases from el-Haraga, Tell-el Da'ba, and el-Lisht were both accompanied by these cultural phenomena; hence, multiple scholars believe that the reuse of Minoan pottery was a common cultural practice for later Egyptians. The maximized utilization of Minoan pottery in the later domestic context was

a regional response for exoticism after the collapse of Middle Bronze Age international networks.

Palace F at Tell-el-Da'ba (Avaris) was built in an interesting geopolitical position, the capital of Non-Egyptian Hyksos rulers. Palace F was built in the Thutmose period (LHI/LMI), and Palace F has a series of Minoanized frescoes with the bull-leaping theme and mysterious theme (Bietak 2005). Bietak suggests Palace F was used as a summer house for the Minoan princess married to the Egyptian Pharaoh during the early Eighteenth Dynasty (Bietak 2005). The palace had combined Egyptian building material and Minoan style plaster wall painting. Thutmose III's entire palace structure in Avaris has followed the Bronze Age palatial system's paradigm in the Eastern Mediterranean. The palace's main functional areas consisted of the storage magazine, adjacent workshop, and central workshop. Palace F had a peristyle hall with a central court, which indicated the functionality of the living room. And the activities used to resettle the foreign princess in Egypt were common for Egyptian royalty. The Egyptians blended their own ideology of architecture to construct the summer palace for a "Minoan princess." (Bietak 2005) Egyptians chose the local materials like mudbrick for building the frame of Palace F, which was different from the traditional ashlar stone material Minoans applied in their palatial structures (Bietak 2005).

According to Manfred Bietak (2005), the Minoan wall painting at Palace F was not found in situ, and most of the fragments of wall painting were found in an ancient pit.

But the wall painting fragments were well preserved, which partially resulted from the relatively dry climate in Egypt and the mudbrick material of the Palace structure. The plaster fresco could easily fall apart from the mudbrick wall while remaining intact, and that was the result of the unstable Minoan fresco technique in the local application in Egypt. Bietak believed that the fresco theme coincided with the Knossos, and the painting craftsmen were supposedly hired from the core area of Knossos' power. The wall paintings were evidence about the Egypto-Aegean contacts in this site, but several Aegean LMIA rhyton imitations were also recovered under the waste deposits and the palace magazines from the Thutmoside period (Barrett 2009). Bietak hypothesized that the locally made pottery to infer the presence of a foreign population in Avaris, but Aegean archaeologists held a doubtful point of view about Bietak's inference. Cline suggested those jugs motif possibly paralleled Middle Cycladic pottery, which was a quite outdated style for artisans in the LBA phase (Bietak 2005; Cline 1994). Cline thought that Bietak's argument about the "Aegean colony" in Egypt is not substantially supported because of limited evidence.

Thebes, the tomb of Senenmut, the fresco decorated elite tomb of Vizier, was built during the reign of Hatshepsut (LMI/LHI, Mid-18th Dynasty). The frescos with a depiction of Aegean people and precious vessels with Minoanized spiral and bull motifs were found in this exquisitely decorated tomb, and this scene should be identified as a procession scene. The iconographical depictions of the rhyton, the Vapheio style cup in monumental size, and Aegean style bronze blades have been presented in the fresco. According to Cline (1994), the fresco did not accompany an identified inscription about

those exotic figures. According to Maticić, many scholars believed this Aegean procession scene might be a “photographic preservation” of a moment in which the Aegean emissaries carried the tributes (*jnw*) to the Egyptian King, which could reflect the real physical beings of certain artifacts from fresco depiction (Maticić 2015). Maticić suggested that the Egyptian fresco from Senenmut’s tomb might cultivate the Egypto-centric bias to the Aegean people; the Aegean procession scene is not evidencing that Aegean was subordinating to Egypt court but serving as evidence of a reciprocal gift-giving system between two polities.

Thebes, Tomb of Rekhmire (TT100), has a fresco with the depiction of Aegean people and Aegean prestigious tributes. The fresco was found in the elite burial context; TT100 was the tomb of Vizier during the reign of Thutmose III (LM/LHI, LMI, Mid-18th Dynasty). An inscription mentions- “chiefs of the Isles which are in the midst of the Great Green”- the title of King of Keftiu in the chamber wall (Cline 1994). There is one panel of fresco painting with an Aegean procession scene. Aegean people were depicted wearing Mycenaean style linen loincloths and carrying gold Aegean style krater and silver Aegean style rhyta, proving the prestige gift-giving system between Aegean and Egyptian elites.

The fresco evidence of the Minoan presence in Egypt increased substantially during the early New Kingdom period. The ascending power of New Kingdom Egypt during the Thutmoside period and the prosperity of the Minoan palatial system founded a

steady base for bilateral diplomacy and cultural exchange. The Minoanized frescoes at Avaris and Egyptian frescoes found with Minoan iconography were cultural products of this period's Aegean-Egyptian diplomatic contact. Minoanized frescoes were only found in the palatial domestic context at Tell-el-Da'ba (Avaris). Minoanized Fresco from the palatial complex at Tell-el-Da'ba has strong Minoan architectural and artistic influence, which indicates that the foreign craftsmanship from the Minoan cultural hinterland was hired to work in the construction of Palace F. That also means that the Egyptian royal court might have direct contact with the "Minoan chief," and the harem building with Minoan style decoration implies that the Minoan princess might be a part of the Pharaoh's foreign harem (Bietak 2005, 2010; Bietak et al. 2012). The fresco evidence with Minoan iconography was mainly found in Theban nobles' mortuary context during the middle Eighteenth Dynasty; the Minoan iconography and the Minoan motif were seemingly popular in the high elite burial under the reign of Hatshepsut/Thutmose III. In TT100 and the tomb of Senenmut, the Aegean people were often depicted as tribute holders in the long procession theme. The burial frescoes with the depiction of Aegean processors were more likely intended to display the prosperity of the Egypt-centric international commercial economy during the Hatshepsut period. Nevertheless, the burial frescoes and the palatial frescoes demonstrate that the commercial contacts and diplomatic contacts between the Egyptian and Minoan palatial systems grew substantially under the early New Kingdom economic and military hegemony.

The "Aegean List" is a topographical list made under the reign of Amenhotep III (LHI/LMIB). The "Aegean list" was recovered during the 1960s. The list was found on

the statue bases from the mortuary temple of Amenhotep III at Kom el Hetan (Cline and Stannish 2011). The topographical list inscribes the name of several Aegean polities, which include Phaistos, Mycenae, Amnisos (Amyklai), Ilios (Ilium or Troy), and Knossos, along with the headings of “*Tanaja*” (Mainland Greece) and “*Keftiu*” (Minoan) (Cline 1994, 112). The names of mainland Greek sites are mentioned more frequently than the names of Cretan sites on the list, the name of Amyklai is even mentioned twice in the text, which indicates the rise of Mycenaean polities and the decline of Cretan polities. Mainland Greece had started to flourish and had acted more actively in diplomatic contact with Egypt.

In the site of Amarna, there were papyrus fragments with an artistic depiction of Mycenaean found with an LHIII A2 stirrup jar. According to Kelder and Cline (2018), these unusual papyrus fragments were found next to the shrine where the King statue was worshipped. The papyrus fragments dated around the Amarna period (end of 18th Dynasty), which paralleled with the LHIII A period (Cline 1996). The papyrus has depicted a battling scene, and there were typical Egyptianized depictions of the Aegean figures in the papyrus. The Aegean people were depicted as men who dressed in loincloths and wore boar tusk helmets. Kelder and Cline (2018) suggested that those Aegean figures who wore boar tusk helmets were Mycenaean mercenaries (Kelder and Cline 2018, 17). Those Mycenaean would have served military service under the Pharaoh’s army. There are over a hundred stirrup jar fragments from Amarna, plus a local imitation.

There were four complete Aegean-style transport stirrup jars found at the site of Zawiyet Umm el-Rackham, the coastal harbor of the Egyptian empire in Libya. The pottery was dated around LMII/LHII to LMIII/LHIII, during the 19th Dynasty. Ben-Shlomo et al. (2011) applied the typological method and petrographic analysis to determine the transport stirrup jars' potential provenance in Zawiyet Umm el-Rackham, and they suggested that vase No.4 was a Mycenaean import by identifying its even thickness temper. No.1-No.3. were Minoan imports. The authors suggested that the site Zawiyet Umm el-Rackham historically served as a redistribution center of foreign cargo into the Egyptian empire (Ben-Shlomo et al. 2011).

At site Tell-el-Da'ba, there were Late Helladic arrow tips found in the Palace G storage magazine. The bronze arrow tips were recovered in the 20th Dynasty stratum, and Bietak suggested those arrow tips belonged to Late Helladic contexts (Bietak 2010, 2012). Bietak indicated that the storage magazine in Palace G functioned as a military workshop and can possibly explain the presence of imported weaponry. There is clear evidence that nearby naval port Peru-Nefer had helped Egyptians transport the foreign military weapons into the palatial workshop (Bietak 2012). The bronze arrowheads have two main types, the IVb-shape and V-shape with tangs, which were possibly imported from Pylos and Knossos.

The Mycenaean evidence in Egypt consisted of more categoric artifacts, including weaponry, pottery, papyrus iconography, and epigraphy inscription. The most common type of imported pottery in Egypt was the Mycenaean stirrup jar; the substantial amounts of stirrup jars from different regions marked a clear pattern of import redistribution in the Egyptian empire. The apparent provenance of stirrup jars and their redistribution center indicated the sophistication of Aegypto-Aegean commercial contacts. The “Aegean list,” weaponry, and papyrus iconography remarked another astonishing fact that Mycenaean and Egypt might have a mercenary deal, even military alliance. Late Helladic Type IV arrowheads were found in the palatial workshop at the Tell-el-Da’ba complex, and the imported weaponry indicated the military cooperation between Egypt and Mycenaean polities was elevated into the upper level during the end of the New Kingdom.

***The preliminary interpretation:***

According to Kemp and Barrett, the earliest archaeological evidence of Aegypto-Aegean contact could be traced to the First Intermediate Period/ early Middle Kingdom contexts. The early evidence of Aegypto-Aegean contacts was mainly developed on an elite level, and most of the early contacts were found in mortuary contexts. In Egypt, the early Middle Minoan pottery and Minoanized sherds were often found next to the royal cemetery or high-class elite necropolis (Barrett 2009; Kemp et al. 1980). The Qubbet el Hawa No.88 burial case is an example of nomarch burial interred with a Minoanized artifact. Archaeologists applied the relative dating method to suggest the burial belonged to the high-status noble who governed the southern border during the 11th Dynasty. But

this burial was reused during the early Middle Kingdom period; Barrett (2009) suggested the Minoanized Kamares vase with applique (Tomb 88, No.323) belonged to the Middle Kingdom context. Although the Kamares vase may not associate with powerful southern nomarchy, this vase is still associated with the southern elite context. The owner of this Minoanized vase might be a rich bureaucrat who worked in the southern protectorate area. The fact that Egyptian elites can access the imitation of the luxury vase with Minoan influence indicates the influence of the Aegean-Aegyptio cultural network and that it had already reached into the Egyptian peripheral area. The locally made Minoanized product could recognize exoticism to the cultural hybrid community on Elephantine, and the exotic Minoanized product enfranchised the elite identity in the periphery of a vast empire. The display of wealth and exoticism can pacify the local lower-class residents in the border to justify their solid economic controls and deter their Nubian neighbors by their economic power. The hegemonic structure of Egyptian authority nourished the basis of multi-regional trading networks and bilateral Elite contacts. The foreign products reinforce an idea of imperialism based on the Egypt-centric hegemony to the local multiethnic community. Producing the imitation of Minoan elite pottery is an expedient way for the Egyptian elite to legitimize their hegemonial identity.

During the Middle Kingdom period, the Egyptian Kingdom firstly expanded its territory into Sanai and Canaan. The expansion of the Egyptian empire caused the relocation of the political center, and Lower Egypt became the new social, political, and economic center. Since the 12th Dynasty, the Middle Egypt site Fayum has become the latest political capital of the prospering kingdom. The ascending political importance of

northern Egypt fostered the economic prosperity of this region. The wealthy economic bases of Lower Egyptian elites provided a steady bedrock of foreign contacts and import consumptions. The diplomatic contacts between Middle Kingdom Egypt and the Levant were already accompanied by reciprocal commodity exchange, and these contacts were arranged under the royal level background. Because the possible elite's reciprocal exchanges were based on diplomacy, that bilateral relationship might also happen between Middle Kingdom Egypt and Crete (MM). The archaeological evidence of Minoan artifacts and Minoan influences is relatively abundant in Lower Egypt. It is more common that the Aegean artifacts be found in the Lower Egypt elite burials. The geographical proximity and political significance of Lower Egypt sites, including Kahun, el-Lisht, and Tell-el-Da'ba, facilitated more direct interactions between Egyptians and Minoans. Most of the Lower Egypt sites with Minoan or Minoanized products were recovered from the elite burial context. For example, the burials from Kahun and el-Lisht were topographically located next to the 12th to 13th Dynasty's royal cemetery. Although the Kamares pottery sherds from El-Lisht were found in the 20th Dynasty domestic context (1100-1000 BC), Kemp et al. (1980) suggests those sherds might be reused historically by later settlers in the 20th Dynasty. Those Kamares pottery sherds from El-Lisht were possibly buried in the early 12th Dynasty elite burial context. Thus, the local elites were the main purchasers of Minoan/Minoanized imports.

A large portion of Minoan-style pottery was made by local craftspeople. The local artisan workshop in Kahun/El-Haraga had a sophisticated pottery industry under the royal cemetery administration. The Minoanized Kamares sherds provide strong inference of

foreign influence on the local luxury production. The relative scarcity of luxurious Minoan imported jars triggered local pottery craftsmanship to specialize in replicas of imports. The unusual amounts of Minoanized pottery sherds in Kahun/El-Haraga also indicate the presence of a foreign population in this site. The local craftsman village might hire foreign artisans to fulfill the luxurious demands of the Elite class. The assistance of foreign artisans and the mature local pottery industry created the cheaper substitute of Minoan Kamares pottery, and the localized pottery donated the essence of exoticism that the royal families and noble class have a strong demand. Middle Kingdom Egyptians had developed a steady repertoire for imitating Middle Minoan pottery and potentially connected with foreign crafting specialists. The 12th Dynasty's Middle Minoan pottery provide a window to detect the potential contacts between two historical paralleled polities. The ceramic analysis from the Middle Kingdom context only provides a glimpse of the grander cultural context of Aegean-Egypto contact.

The 13th Dynasty and Hyksos period left much uncertainty to Egyptologists who studied this period. There was no clear chronological boundary between Hyksos Dynasty/15th Dynasty and the 13th Dynasty during the Second Intermediate Period. The Minoan artifacts from this period were mainly recovered from Avaris, the capital of the Hyksos Dynasty. Hyksos likely promoted the economic and political importance of Avaris during the second intermediate period. Avaris became an international trading port for imported foreign cargo. There is some convincing evidence that Minoan-Egypt contact was continuous between the Minoan palatial system and the Egyptian palatial system during the 17th century BC. MMII Kamares sherds and Middle Minoan gold

jewelry had been recovered from Avaris' palatial context since the systematic excavation began in the 1990s. MMII Kamares sherds and MMII golden pendant might originally belong to the same elite burial context, and the plunder activities caused the relocation of Kamares sherds in a different stratum. On the other hand, the MMIIIB Kamares sherds from the palatial site and the MMII golden pendant were made to the core region of Minoan culture, they were transported into Egypt, and some were buried within Asiatic Elite burial. Hence, Barrett suggested that a long-distance exchange between Egypt and Minoan existed during the chaotic period between the 18th and 17th centuries (Barrett 2009). Although the palace burial from Avaris was heavily plundered, the unique non-Egyptian burial custom indicated this tomb had an Asiatic trait. Asiatic people may have heavily influenced Avaris during the 13th Dynasty, and I suggested that the 13th Dynasty was chronologically juxtaposed with the 15th Dynasty (Hyksos Dynasty) during the MMII phase. Hence, the Asiatic palace burial with the MMII gold pendant and Egyptian ceramic evidence still provided some chronological information for sequencing the chronological parallel between different polities during the second intermediate period. The Middle Minoan artifacts renewed our understanding of the chronological parallel between the 13th and Hyksos dynasties. That chronological hypothesis implies that palatial diplomatic and commercial interaction probably continued between the Asiatic/Hyksos elite class in Egypt and the Minoan proto palatial system. The foreign rulers in the Hyksos royal court still facilitated traditional commerce with Egyptians' old Minoan counterparts.

Avaris has increased its economic and political importance after the second intermediate period. During the early New Kingdom period, the Avaris retained its commercial and political importance in Egypt. Bietak led the excavation from the 1980s to the 1990s, revealing the Minoan presence in the Avaris. According to Bietak's archaeological evidence, one important port, *Peru-Nefer*, was established next to the Avaris during the reign of Thutmose III, and this site became a significant redistribution center of foreign cargo. The word "*keftiu* ship" (or Cretan ship) was mentioned several times in the official Egyptian documents about the site *Peru-Nefer*, which coincided with excavation results from Avaris. Apparently, Aegean artifacts in Avaris were redistributed via the port or naval base *Peru-Nefer*. Minoan artifacts have continuously been found in Avaris palatial area on the early New Kingdom layer, implying that the Minoanized cultural products were still popular for the elite class during the 18th Dynasty. One LMIB Minoan rhyta and several Minoanized fresco fragments were found in the 18th Dynasty Palace F complex. The strong Minoanized feature of palace construction and artistic motif inferred that the Palace F had served as a harem house for Minoan princesses who were married by Thutmose III. The finding of Late Minoan rhyta indicated there were some Minoan ritual activities arranged in the Palace, and the LMIB rhyta possibly applied in the cult activity. The possible ritual affiliation and strong Minoan artistic influence in the palace decoration indicated the bilateral relationship between Minoan power and Egyptian power; their close diplomatic and commercial relations were reinforced by arranging possible marital alignment and sending Minoan artisans to Egypt. The Palace F and Palace G at Avaris were the cultural compounds of bilateral gift-giving diplomacy between strong hegemon Egypt and powerful Minoan Sea power.

Several early 18th Dynasty Theban high-rank noble tombs have evidence to prove that the gift-giving activities existed between New Kingdom Egypt and LBA Aegean. The strong connection between the Egyptian royal family and Minoan high elites is reflected in the fresco paintings in the Tomb of Rekhmire and Tomb of Senenmut. These tomb wall paintings include depictions of Aegean style luxurious tribute and procession themes with the Aegean people. Because Rekhmire and Senenmut were Viziers of the 18th Dynasty royal court, they possibly witnessed the Aegean procession in their real-life experience. The depiction of the procession scene was a real event; artistic themes in the early 18th Dynasty high-rank burials confirm the presence of stable Aegean-Egyptian interactions. Although Egyptian artists depicted Aegeans as humble people under the Egyptian hegemony for sending mandatory tributes, the real identity of those Aegeans in wall paintings possibly were diplomats, and their duties were not simply to carry exotic prestige items. The Egyptian empire was likely to build further diplomatic cooperation with Aegean polities; the gift-giving activity of the Aegean side seems a signal for developing a further reciprocal relationship between Egypt and Aegean. The “Aegean list” from Kom el Hetan indicated that diplomats from different parts of the Aegean region had been missioned into Egypt. The different mainland Greek polities’ names were mentioned in the list, New Kingdom Egyptians were seemingly very familiar with Aegean polities, and they even distinguished the Cretans and mainlanders by categorizing their names. Egypt’s authority ought to strengthen its hegemony in the eastern Mediterranean; having peace and allegiance with the remote Aegean was essential to deter the military threats from Anatolia. The diplomatic relationship between Egypt and

the Aegean world had developed into its climax during the mid-18th Dynasty. Thus, the peaceful diplomatic relation between Egypt and Aegean polities provided a secure platform for long-distance trading between Egypt and Aegean.

The Mycenaean mercenaries and a greater amount of Aegean prestige imports were introduced into Egypt during the late-18th Dynasty. The Amarna papyrus fragment with a depiction of Mycenaean soldiers and stirrup jars accompanied by the papyrus indicate Mycenaean militaristic activities that might happen in the realm of Akhenaten. Egypt's empire became an economic focal point in the eastern Mediterranean. Its militaristic hegemony and its phenomenal economic influence attracted foreign merchants to explore more potential trading intermediaries in the vast realm of empire. Some LMIII/LHIII stirrup jars were found in the redistribution ports from Zawiyet Umm el-Rackham (modern-day Libya), an import harbor under Egypt's control. The redistribution center of Aegean goods at Libya and Israel marked another trading route between Egypt and Aegean (Ben-Shlomo et al. 2011). There were more multiple seafaring options for the Aegean sailors to sail into Egypt, and the ports along the empire's seashore became the main sites for redistributing Aegean, Levantine, and Cypriote wares. The Aegypto-Aegean commercial interaction became a piecemeal of entire international trading networks in the Eastern Mediterranean. The geographical advantage of Levant and Cyprus carried more substantial effects on the international trading networks. Hence, the imported Cypriote and Levantine artifacts were quantitatively larger than Aegean imports. The peripheral location of the Aegean world caused relatively minor effects in the LBA international trading networks. When we

compare it with historical statistics of Aegypto-Aegean commercial interaction, there is a substantial increase in the late-18th Dynasty /LHIII period.

The Aegypto-Aegean Bronze Age connection generally followed the pattern of power-orientated praxis between the palatial system in the Eastern Mediterranean world. The stability of political sovereignty and concreted economic tributary systems are the foundation of Aegypto-Aegean contacts. The Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom's powerful imperialism strengthened the potential motivation for establishing foreign contacts with the Aegean world, the diplomatic reciprocity, commercial interests, and military reinforcement, which reflected from the different exotic Aegean luxuries and iconographies in the Egyptian sites. What type of administrative praxis have been coordinated in the gift-giving system between Egypt and Aegean, and how did Bronze Age elites balance their political motivation with their economic demands? All these questions lead to the main purpose of the paper, the hegemonial construction of elite identity and palatial authority. The essential discussion of this bilateral praxis is dragged out by this unique political phenomenon, which the Neo-Gramscian approach could be plugged into a discussion of the Egypt-centric world system and Aegean's roles in the greater world system.

## **Chapter 2: A Gramscian approach to Bronze Age International Relations**

*Introduction to my theoretical approach*

Bronze Age international relations (hereafter, IR), are not easy to discuss, having been intertwined with multiple subjects' discourse and theoretical paradigms. The theoretical foundation of IR study guides interpretation, and commingled with the attitude of each scholar, forms an individual case analysis with its historical particularity. Gramscian theory is a crucial pathway entry us into Bronze Age IR study, especially the case of Aegypto-Aegean interactions. In a traditional perspective, Gramscian theory and its ideological methodology can only be applied to analyze the internal struggle of polities (Gramsci and Henderson 1998). Gramsci's approach to hegemony was initially designed to question the class struggle during medieval feudalistic Italy, which focused on how the ruling class utilized their economic dominance to reinforce their legitimized power. Cox summarizes Gramsci's idea about the proletarian hegemony as follow: the revolutionaries establish their dictatorial leadership by maintaining dominance, and their leadership is enfranchised with the consent of the allied class (or subaltern class) (Cox 1983). In this thesis, I apply the analytical functionality of Gramscian hegemony theory rather than its revolutionary functionality. When I thought about how medieval Italian patrons could enfranchise their prestigious status over subaltern peasants, I started to think classical Gramsci theory might be innovatively applied in ancient international relationships. The juxtaposition of the privileged ruling class and subaltern working class is a typical contradiction in Classic Gramscian critique, and this contradiction could also be applied in the relationship between an imperialist polity and subaltern polities.

During the early 1980s, scholars such as Robert Cox already proposed expanding Gramscian theory into the study of international relations. Cox develops Neo-Gramscian theory from the classic Gramscian approach in the class struggle. He cites Gramsci's analogy about the social structure of hegemony that could also exist in the international field to set up a theoretical foundation of the Neo-Gramscian approach in international relations (Cox 1983). In Cox's theory, the concepts of "hegemony" and "hegemonism" should be clearly defined by their political economy meanings as used in IR study. The term "hegemonism" is generally associated with the concept of imperialism, which was often misused by Cold War propaganda and scholarship. The "hegemony" in Neo-Gramscian theory refers to the economic and cultural dominance of a polity in the international field (Cox 1983). Cox mentions that hegemony could be referred to as the dependence relationship of states, with the level of autonomy indicating the state status. The core hegemon and periphery subordinated states constructed a world order system. Morton (2007) summarizes this hegemony in international relationships to a simpler correspondent triangular model: the world order, the social relation of production, and the form of the state; all three of these factors are interdependent. Then, the Neo-Gramscian approach becomes a systematic methodology with a clear direction. The world order, the production mode, and the form of the state will be the indicators with which I examine the hegemony and hegemonic transition in the Late Bronze Age world system. I will discuss each of them from this historical context.

*The form of state and Phase A&B*

Historical materialism reveals the generalities of the universe and particularities of the pre-modern production mode, which over-simplified the rationalistic analysis of ancient apparatus and hegemony. However, Classical Marxism describes the exception of the Asiatic production mode, which forms in an archetypical commendatory accumulation of capital. Since the late 1980s, scholars criticized and developed the Classical Marxist theory about ancient capital accumulation. They believed the ancient capitalist world system could be based on a similar socio-political background. The coexistence of internationalism, imperialism, and commodification composed three pillars of ancient capitalism (Frank et al. 1993). The archaic state interactions were simply productive fruition of this ancient political-economic system. The synchronization and common way of capital accumulation in Eastern Mediterranean polities were the main factors that facilitated the foundation of Aegypto-Aegean contacts. The level of capital accumulation determines the economic prosperity and degree of social complexity. According to Frank et al. (1993), the stages of hegemony are mainly dichotomized into two phases: the ascending and the down phases. Hence, he generalizes it as A&B phases. A phase is a critical transition stage of a complex society that polity could concentrate the accumulation of capital, which is the prerequisite stage for basing economic establishment. B phase is a downstage which was mainly presented in the form of decentralization of capital accumulation. The two-phase dichotomy fits well with the situation of Bronze Age international relations, revealing the hegemonic transition from different sectors, including commercial interaction, cultural interaction, and diplomacy (Frank et al. 1993).

### *The social structure of production*

Moreover, capital accumulation triggers the development process of prestige identity, which, in a form of socio-economic inertia, develops international elite-level contacts. The internal fiscal interactions are the central means of accumulating capital and enhancing the purchasing power of the polity (Frank et al. 1993; Yoffee and Baines 2018). Hence, the emergence of economically privileged groups is simultaneously accompanied by internal accumulation of capital, who are the major beneficiaries of the pre-modern world system. Bronze Age political-economic structures were the most efficient administrative response for maximizing the economic potentials of this era. Bronze Age statecraft's authoritarian state accumulation mode was particularly suitable for describing ancient statecraft in the Eastern Mediterranean (Wengrow 2007; Schon 2007). The Egyptian kingdom system has often been viewed as an administrative mode with a robust totalitarian characteristic from the Egyptian side. Pharaonic Egypt's economic mode consisted of dominant state accumulation and minor private accumulation (Frank et al. 1993). This mode led to a situation in which elites-controlled prestige commerce, which fundamentally prepared the ground for international luxury commercial activity in Egypt's high society.

Although the power structure of Minoan society is currently a mystery, according to archaeological evidence from palatial storage and the architectural complexity of the Minoan site, many scholars believed Middle Minoan social-political structure was possibly an up-to-down hierarchical structure with a centralizing palatial system (Schoep

2010). The palatial-centered system indicates the presence of a privileged ruling class and the presence of prestige consumption. The Mycenaean citadel-based palatial system had generally followed a similar power structure with Middle Minoan high culture praxis (Parkinson and Galaty 2007). The similar commendatory mode of administrative apparatus between Egypt and Aegean was a crucial part of bilateral elite contact, including commercial interaction and diplomatic interaction, which emerge from similar power legitimization concerns (Yoffee and Baines 2018). A sort of archaic “contemporality” existed between Aegean and Egyptian polities; their congruent economic and political demands under the coherent power structure more likely were the basis of their bilateral international interaction. My theoretical basis is constructed on this historical reality.

### *The World Order*

In the Neo-Gramscian context, the difference between the term “hegemony” and “hegemonism” needs to be separately discussed in the context of the Late Bronze Age world system. The historical particularity of pharaonic Egyptian imperialism had fluctuated during a different phase of the Bronze Age. Was Egypt a hegemonic polity or did they practice hegemonism? Firstly, according to the theory of Cox (1983), Egypt had achieved economic dominance and cultural dominance during the Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom periods and had operated as a counterhegemonic force in the Eastern Mediterranean world during the second intermediate period. The Egyptian polity had endured multiple hegemonic transitions during the entire Bronze Age. Hence, the concept

of hegemony can directly plug into the regional geopolitics of the eastern Mediterranean world. The idea of “hegemonism” can largely be equivalent to the term “imperialism” (Cox 1983), while regional imperialism is a byproduct of economic or military hegemony. The imperialistic structure is a physical reflection of economic dominance and hegemonic apparatus, so the hegemonism of the Egyptian imperial system also coexisted with the economic hegemony (Cox 1983; Gramsci and Henderson 1998). In my approach, I will use imperialism to refer to the latter situation of hegemonism. Without having an economic or military hegemony, the foundation of imperialism could no longer be sustained. The period of hegemonic transition is the most critical marker to outline a trajectory of ancient international relations.

There are three peculiarly important periods when we discuss the Aegypto-Aegean relationship from an Egypt-centric perspective: The late phase of Middle Kingdom Egypt (12th and 13th Dynasties) was the first contact period, the late Second Intermediate Period and the early New Kingdom period (17th and 18th Dynasties) were the second contact period, and the middle New Kingdom period (18th and 19th Dynasties) was the third contact period. Egypt varied its status in the eastern Mediterranean world orders during each of these periods; the dominance of the Egyptian state primarily depended on which A&B phase it was (Frank et al. 1993).

The first contact period (12th to 13th Dynasty) was hegemonic. The world order of this period was centered on Egyptian state power, including military interventions and economic colonization (Wengrow 2007); Egypt was the core of the entire hegemonic world order. Indeed, Egyptian rulers used military force to establish both military and economic dominance systems in the Levant. Because of their peripheral position in the world order, the Aegean and Levant polities played as subaltern allies of Egyptian hegemony (Gramsci and Henderson 1998). The Egypt-centric hegemony had a strong element of structural stratification between core and periphery.

The second contact period (17th to 18th Dynasty) was not hegemonic for Egypt. The Egyptian polity played a role of counterhegemonic power against the new Hyksos hegemon during the second intermediate period (Cox 1983). Egyptian rulers lost their control of imported harbors in Lower Egypt; therefore, Egyptians lost their opportunity to maintain international commerce. In addition, the Hyksos regime occupied the Lower Egyptian harbors to continue playing the economic role of their Egyptian predecessor; the Hyksos dynasty became the new hegemon who charged the economic dominance. Subaltern Egyptian indigenous dynasty (17th Dynasty) and Aegean polities established close political alliances against the Hyksos hegemony. This counterhegemony alliance encouraged the emergence of a systematic ideology (especially the high culture) in elite society. When Egyptian indigenous power reunified Lower Egypt to expel foreign rulers,

the core-periphery mode of Egypt-centric hegemony structure was re-legitimized and reconstructed (Schon 2007).

The third contact period (18th Dynasty to 19th Dynasty) was hegemonic. Egypt stepped into the stage of maintaining either hegemony or imperialism (Cox 1983). The Egyptian empire occupied the major harbors along the Libyan and Canaanite coastlines and conquered the major military fortifications around Levant and Mesopotamia (Ben-Shlomo et al. 2011; Wallis Budge 1893; Zangani 2016). Egypt played a dominant role either in international commerce or military imperialism. The Eastern Mediterranean world order became Egypt-centric again during the reign of Amenhotep III, with the elite-level prosperous international commerce maintained with high connectivity. Egyptian core rulers and Near Eastern subordinated rulers maintained close bilateral communication. The Aegean states played as the subaltern polities during the age of Egypt-centric hegemony. The luxuries and mercenaries' commerce between Aegean and Egypt were enculturated under this context (Kelder and Cline 2018; Schofield and Parkinson 1994). The subaltern city-states were pressured to provide gifts to Egypt because they were threatened by nearby Egypt's military presence; the subaltern city-states used a gift-giving system to maintain their limited governance under Egyptian protection. The elite-level gift-giving system and tributary system between Egypt and subaltern city-states in the Levant and

Aegean reveal the presence of Egyptian hegemony in international relationships (Feldman 2002).

I will select the historical periods from the end of Middle Kingdom Egypt to the New Kingdom Egypt for my case study about Aegyptio-Aegean contact. I will coordinate the archaeological evidence from my first chapter's dataset in support of my argument about international interaction and hegemonial transition in the Bronze Age eastern Mediterranean world.

*The case study in Aegyptio-Aegean contact:*

I consider the Middle Kingdom period from the Egyptian context as a first contact period when the Middle Kingdom's military superiority constructed early Egyptian imperialism and hegemony. Since Mentuhotep II reunified a separated Egypt with militaristic actions after the catastrophic EBA collapse (the end of the Old Kingdom dynasty system), the accumulation of capital of Middle Kingdom Egypt was pursued through warfare investment and an expansionist agenda. The fortifications with large military presence at the Egyptian-Nubian border are the best archaeological evidence of this brutal Middle Kingdom capital accumulation process (Bestock 2017). The Middle Kingdom had achieved its zenith in sovereignty and territoriality at the end of the 12th Dynasty. The military expansion of the Middle Kingdom completed the process of capital accumulation, and the 12th Dynasty court politics largely restored the centralized order of Egyptian kingship. The accumulation of capital and centralization of elite power are two

factors that boost the economic prosperity of the “inner-elite” class and the subsidiary economic prosperity of the “sub-elite” class, which could also facilitate the augmentation of luxury consumption. The archaeological evidence of such consumption was found in el-Lisht, Qubbet-el-Hawa, el-Haraga, and Abydos, the political and commercial centers of the late Middle Kingdom (Barrett 2009; Kemp et al. 1980; Walberg 1997).

The direct archaeological evidence of Aegypto-Aegean contact could be retrieved from the late First Intermediate Period and early Middle Kingdom context (MMII-MMIII). The Egyptianized/imported Kamares pottery are mostly found in the Egyptian elite burial context (Kemp et al. 1980; Walberg 1991). The burial contexts of Aegean-style luxury artifacts have mainly belonged to sub-elites who played minor roles in Egyptian high culture, which I view as evidence of the subsidiary effect of international prestige exchange between Middle Minoan and Middle Kingdom Egypt (Yoffee and Baines 1998; 2018). Since the sub-elites had become the beneficiaries of the Aegypto-Aegean exchange, we can imagine that the size of that international exchange would have been very influential at that period. Only the solid economic and military hegemony of the 12th Dynasty Middle Kingdom Egypt could boost such internal demands of high culture and the magnitude of core-periphery networks (Parkinson and Galaty 2007; Yoffee and Baines 2018). The first phase of substantial Aegypto-Aegean contact was conducted under this typical centralized bureaucratic economic structure; Egyptian inner elites in the Middle Kingdom had already constructed their high culture by purchasing Minoan luxury, and even the Egyptian sub-elites had conformed into a norm of

possessing Minoan luxury by purchasing an imitated version (Yoffee and Baines 2018). Although this “Minoan fashion” existed in the upper society of Middle Kingdom Egypt, we still cannot make a clear argument that there were diplomatic contacts between these two small polities. The diffusion phenomenon of Minoan luxury was mainly conducted by the commercial demands, which I would consider a subcultural effect through means of consumption.

The Second Intermediate Period (especially the 17th Dynasty) and the early 18th Dynasty were the second climax of Aegypto-Aegean contact, when the major turning point of geopolitics happened in the eastern Mediterranean, from both literary evidence and archaeological evidence. During the second intermediate period, the unified indigenous polity was disintegrated into several fragile regional regimes in Egypt. There were more than 130 kings who had ruled Egypt from 1780 BCE to 1550 BCE; the political situation of the Second Intermediate Period was certainly unstable (Wallis Budge 1893). The Palestinian invaders occupied the north of Egypt, and Hyksos became the major hegemon at this period. In contrast, Abydos Dynasty (regional power) and Theban dynasty (16th to 17th Dynasty), who occupied the southern land, were generally subordinated to the Hyksos hegemony (Wegner 2015).

According to Frank et al. (1993), the unstableness of state-level political organization meant that Egypt was in the phase B or down phase, and the old hegemonic

status of Middle Kingdom Egypt and its interconnected world system no longer existed. So, this was the age of hegemonic transition, and Asiatic foreigners replaced a unified Egyptian dominant kingdom. According to Frank's theory about the world system, the international elite contact would not have a solid economic ground for sustaining during the down phase (Frank et al. 1993). Nevertheless, the southern Egyptian regime still maintained some contact with the Aegean people, and Aegyptio-Aegean contact even developed into a new stage. Although the south Egypt regime was geographically separated from the Mediterranean Sea by the Hyksos occupation of the north, the southern Theban Dynasty possibly constructed a diplomatic relationship with the Aegean.

Hitherto, the archaeological evidence of this period reveals the diplomatic relationship between southern Egyptian rulers and the Aegean people. There was epigraphical evidence that late-17th Dynasty queen Ahhotep II had a unique title that called her the mistress of the shore of Hau-nebut, which Cline and Bietak believed somehow related to Crete (Cline 1998, 213; Tyldesley 2006). I do not suggest that Egypt controlled the Minoan people and Crete; it was a political proclamation of southern Egyptian rulers for reinforcing their orthodoxies, and probably exaggerated the actual international diplomatic relationship between the Theban regime and the Aegean. Theban rulers used that vague title to declare the legitimacy of their authority and their "hegemonic ownership" in the Mediterranean. The connection with the Aegean in this subtle historic period possibly indicated that the Egypt-Aegean alliance was constructed

with the same geopolitical interest. During the Second Intermediate Period, Aegean and southern rulers probably formed direct diplomatic relationships and political alliances for countering Hyksos hegemony; because Hyksos occupied major Egyptian ports along the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, the Hyksos could also threaten the sea power of Minoans and Cycladic Aegeans by deploying their fleet to blockade the Eastern Mediterranean (Cline 1998). Hence, the presence of Hyksos in the Delta region might have weakened commercial connectivity between the Aegean and indigenous Egyptian rulers, which deeply hurt the economic and strategic interests of the Aegean and indigenous Egyptians.

On the other hand, at the end of the 17th Dynasty, Theban rulers were also seeking a strategic partner from outside of Egypt, intending for their reunification plan under the regency of Queen Ahhotep II (Tyldesley 2006). The Aegean, with similar economic and diplomatic interests, could become the best strategic partner of Egypt against the Hyksos. The contact between Aegean and Egyptian elites had developed into a higher level, and an affiliated high culture with strong Aegean characteristics emerged in Egypt during this period. Some late 17th dynasty luxury artifacts had a strong Aegean artistic style, especially with motifs of griffin and spiral being introduced into Egyptian prestige artworks. For example, a ceremonial ax of queen Ahhotep II with Aegean style griffin decoration was discovered in the 17th Dynasty royal mortuary context (Tyldesley 2006).

Furthermore, the 17th Dynasty's Aegean cultural influence and Egypt-Aegean alliance certainly extended to the early 18th Dynasty. There was the substantial promotion of archaeological evidence about the Aegypt-Aegean contact, from the royal residential context and high elite mortuary context, during this early 18th Dynasty or Thutmoside period. The recent archaeological evidence proved that the Egypt-Aegean alliance was reinforced by different means of a reciprocal gift-giving system that included proposing international political marriage, maintaining luxury commerce, and donating diplomatic tributes (Bietak 2005, 2010; Cline, 1998). For instance, the Minoanized fresco painting at Tell-el-Da'ba (Avaris) and the Rekhmire tomb's wall painting with an Aegean procession theme at Thebes presented a different form of Aegean influence in the early New Kingdom Egypt. The increasing complexity of the artform indicates that the Aegypt-Aegean contact was revealed in elite high culture and presented the trajectory of diplomatic relationships (Yoffee and Baines 2018).

The Palace F haram structure at Avaris and its Minoanized fresco revealed their unique diplomatic and political significance during the Thutmoside period (Bietak 2005; Cline 1994); the Minoanized fresco and Palace F structure was evidence of a possible political marriage between Minoan and Thutmoside Egypt (Bietak 2005). Because the decoration of Palace F at Avaris was engaged with a significant amount of Minoan craftsmanship from Bietak's hypothesis, the entire palace was a dowry of the Minoan princess who would join Thutmose III's haram. In this case, the whole palace complex and Minoan princess were used as a gift for reinforcing the diplomatic partnership

between Egypt and Crete (Cline 1998), which had developed further than the antecedent 17th dynasty Aegean-Egypt relation. This political marriage allowed Egyptian administrative authority to gain political benefits from both internal and external factors. For the internal aspect, considering the positive influence of the Egypt-Aegean alliance during reunification at the end of the 17th Dynasty, I believe that Egypt used this international marriage and tribute as political propaganda for enfranchising their legitimacy in northern Egypt, where it was recently reunified. The indigenous Egyptian rulers wanted to demonstrate an image as they tried to rebuild the Egypt-centric world order, specifically Palace F at Avaris (Bietak 2005); constructing a palace with the aids of a foreign ally can convey a powerful message for the Egyptian commoners to understand their rulers' orthodoxy.

Why has the hegemonial state always been accompanied by multiethnic contacts? From my Neo-Gramscian perspective, Egyptian rulers during the Thutmoside period tried to coordinate their military conquest agenda and economic ambition in the Near East with their traditional international partners to develop an integral world order (Cox 1983). Egyptians wanted to establish a pro-Egyptian regime or at least a hospitable environment for Egypt's authority to proclaim their hegemonial quest in the grand Mediterranean region. The elite gift-giving system involved in Aegyptio-Aegean contact was a prominent diplomatic strategy for maintaining the equal bilateral relationship between these two powerful polities (Cline 1998); Crete could become an economic beneficiary of this new built Egypt-centric world system by sending the princess to Egypt's court with a pleasant

dowry. Political marriage and relevant dowry were the ultimate forms of staple finance in Bronze Age international elite reciprocal exchange, and political marriage elevated that exchange relationship from the economic level into the ideological and political level (Nakassis 2010). This form of exchange was different from antecedent luxury commerce; The political marriage could certainly provoke these two remote polities to establish a well-accepted diplomatic consensus, whereas more feasible praxis in the commercial sector and military cooperation could be proposed. Hence, the Egypt-Aegean alliance is my hypothetical argument about the Aegypto-Aegean connection at the Second Intermediate Period (late 17th Dynasty) and early New Kingdom period (early 18th Dynasty) for explaining increasing archaeological evidence during this period. The drastic hegemonial transition in Egypt was a key impulse that facilitated that relationship to the higher and more complex level.

During the middle New Kingdom (the late 18th Dynasty and the beginning of the 19th Dynasty), the Aegypto-Aegean contacts were maintained at a high level at diplomatic, military, and commercial domains. A series of expansion wars already strengthened the construction of Egypt-centric hegemony during the Thutmoside period, the long reign of Amenhotep III and his predecessors developed long-term economic prosperity (Cline 1994; Wallis Budge 1893). Egypt drove its military imperialism into a super-hegemony with financial solid and soft power; capital accumulation of the state's affluence encouraged consumerism in the inner and secondary elite classes. Hence, the demand for foreign products and luxury increased substantially during this period (Barrett

2009; Cline 1994; Yoffee and Baines 2018). The archaeological records from Tell-el-Da'ba, Zawiyet Umm el-Rackham, Uluburun, and Amarna (Ben-Shlomo et al. 2011; Bietak 2005; Schofield & Parkinson 1994), mostly Mycenaean LHIII stirrup jars and rhyta, proved that the Aegypto-Aegean trade routes were expanded into the new territorial realm of Egypt. The presence of new imported redistribution centers at Egypt's conquered realm proves that substantial secondary elite commercial activities were augmented by strong internal economic impetus (Ben-Shlomo et al. 2011). Maintaining optimal diplomatic bilateral relations with commercial and political partners in the eastern Mediterranean world seemed to be a prioritized concern for Egyptian rulers (Feldman 2002). They prioritized this concern because they wanted to balance their benefits and demands about international commerce. The archaeological evidence of high-level Aegypto-Aegean contact from the "Aegean list" at Kom el-Hetan reveals that the hierarchical diplomatic relationship between multiple Aegean palatial centers and Egypt had been strongly tied during the late 18th Dynasty (Cline 1994; Kelder and Cline 2018). While the Amarna letters already reveal the hierarchical layout of diplomatic status between different Near Eastern polities, the Aegean polities seemed to have been diminished into a more subordinated position when recorded into the diplomatic context of imperialistic Egypt. Egyptian imperialism with hegemonic economic power formed a world system with strong Egypt-centric characteristics; Aegean polities were supposed to conform to this hegemonic system for maximizing their profits in international reciprocal exchange. An ordnance trade and mercenary commerce were new products of Late Bronze Age internationalism and imperialism, which also happened in the Aegypto-Aegean relationship during the Middle New Kingdom period. The highly connected

polities of the LBA Eastern Mediterranean all faced threats of military confrontation between different imperial alliances. The military conflict between Egypt and the Hittites provoked the possibility that Egypt strived to hire mercenaries and purchase military equipment from neighborly allies. The Amarna Papyrus, with a depiction of Mycenaean soldiers, indicated that the Aegean did some mercenary activities under the Egyptian imperialist agenda (Schofield and Parkinson 1994).

### **Conclusion:**

All in all, with a long academic discussion about Aegypto-Aegean contact in the scholarship, the perplexity of Aegypto-Aegean contact is continuously being resolved by more and more details from archaeological evidence. From the early 1920s, diffusionists like Evans (1925) made arbitrary arguments about the affiliated connection between Aegean and Egypt. In the late 1980s to early 1990s, scholars like Walberg (1991), Kemp (1980), and Bietak (1991) started collecting and analyzing archaeological records about Aegypto-Aegean contact from a world-system perspective. During the 1990s, Manfred Bietak and Eric Cline conducted a series of research project about international contact in the eastern Mediterranean World, and their contribution to the study of Aegypto-Aegean interaction revolutionized this field. Eric Cline explores the Late Bronze Age international interaction from the angles of multiculturalism, power structure, bilateral diplomacy, and international commerce. At the beginning of the 21st century, Parkinson et al. (2007) started to explore the archaic state interactions from multiple political-economic perspectives. Power structure and material culture are starting to be associated

with the study of ancient interaction. Present-day scholars coordinated the different regional studies' approaches and popular political theory into ancient interaction and internationalism studies. Hence, the theory of Aegypto-Aegean contact is increasingly nuanced. The discussion about Aegypto-Aegean contact involves a the political-philosophical critique about the coordination of ideology and praxis; the material culture, power structure, and hegemony can all be traced back to the ideological impulse of the state apparatus. The anti-authoritarian agenda of present-day anthropological theory does impact my theory construction. Thus, I have followed this ideological tendency from the academic mainstream throughout my thesis.

During my research, I have applied the Neo-Gramscian theory and Neo-Marxism world system theory into my theoretical approach to Aegypto-Aegean contact. The power enfranchisement of high culture (Cox 1983), structural analysis of international relationships (Morton 2007), and hegemonic transition become my primary concern in the research of Aegypto-Aegean contact during the entire Bronze Age (Gramsci and Henderson 1998). For exploring the Egypt-centric word orders, I have mainly focused my attention on Bronze Age Aegean artifacts discovered in Egyptian sites. The archaeological evidence from the Egyptian site and my Neo-Gramscian theoretical basis fuse together to create a clear image of hegemonic transition in the eastern Mediterranean World. I postulate that Aegypto-Aegean contact was strongly associated with the ascent and fall of the Egyptian imperial system, and its connectivity could be varied in different international diplomatic contexts. The ascending phase of the imperial system

accumulated a terrain for nourishing massive international commerce, cultural exchange, and ideological internationalism. The collapse of Egypt-centric hegemony was always associated with the reduction of bilateral contact between Egypt and Aegean. In this context, the Middle Kingdom (MMI-MMII) and the New Kingdom (LHI-LHIIIC) are two major contact periods under the Egypt-centric hegemony. The substantial Aegypto-Aegean cultural interactions during the Second Intermediate Period (MMIII) are exceptions when subaltern Egyptians allied with Aegeans to counter Hyksos hegemony of the Eastern Mediterranean. However, power-oriented praxis in multicultural interactions is always the primary impetus for the authoritarian state apparatus in the Bronze Age world. Thus, I will summarize Aegypto-Aegean contact with an argument that the maintenance of international commerce and construction of internationalized high culture will only facilitate power enfranchisement of the imperialist ruling class.

The historical trajectory of hegemonic Egypt-centric world order meant that the Egyptian polity could spread their cultural influence into the margins of the existing world. The Aegypto-Aegean contact is the Bronze Age world system's projection, which was influenced by Egyptian Imperialism's hegemony. The Aegypto-Aegean contact is a subtle part of the entire Bronze Age world order; maintaining contact relies mainly on the persistence of imperial order. The objectivity of highly connected networks was a projection of political ecology in the existing world order, and the Aegypto-Aegean contact was imminently vanished by the collapse of civilization during the first millennium BC. The synchronicity of series collapses during the Late Bronze Age

Mediterranean world indicated what a severe impact had been mediated by the highly socio-economical connectivity under the Late Bronze Age world order. The weakened and collapsing imperial system is incapable of maintaining its cultural hegemony. Of course, the subjugated recipient polities like Mycenaean states could never access Egyptian hegemony's synthetic productions. The historical evidence and archaeological evidence could help contemporary scholars to understand the world system of their era. The rise and fall of empires have always been considered a permanent element to ascribe the success or failure of regional political wrestling. I think this typical historical perspective could be scrutinized when we index the manipulation of regional networks under a norm of cultural hegemony.

On the other hand, we can continuously gain experience from the previous failure of Bronze Age networks to coordinate our social-political agenda in modern IR, and we should think about what we should do for the endangered and delicate international relations during the post-pandemic age. Because of that empiricism philosophy, I believe the prosperity of the late-20th century economy and the decline of the early-21st century economy could be comparatively approached the similar subject of Late Bronze Age contacts in mind. I envision an extra discussion in the future, having some comparative examples from my contemporaries to scrutinize the cultural anthropological continuity between the Late Bronze Age settlers and contemporary humans when they have become entangled with "globalization" and disintegration of "world order." This is crucial feature of Bronze Age interactions that could alarm most 21st century citizens.

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