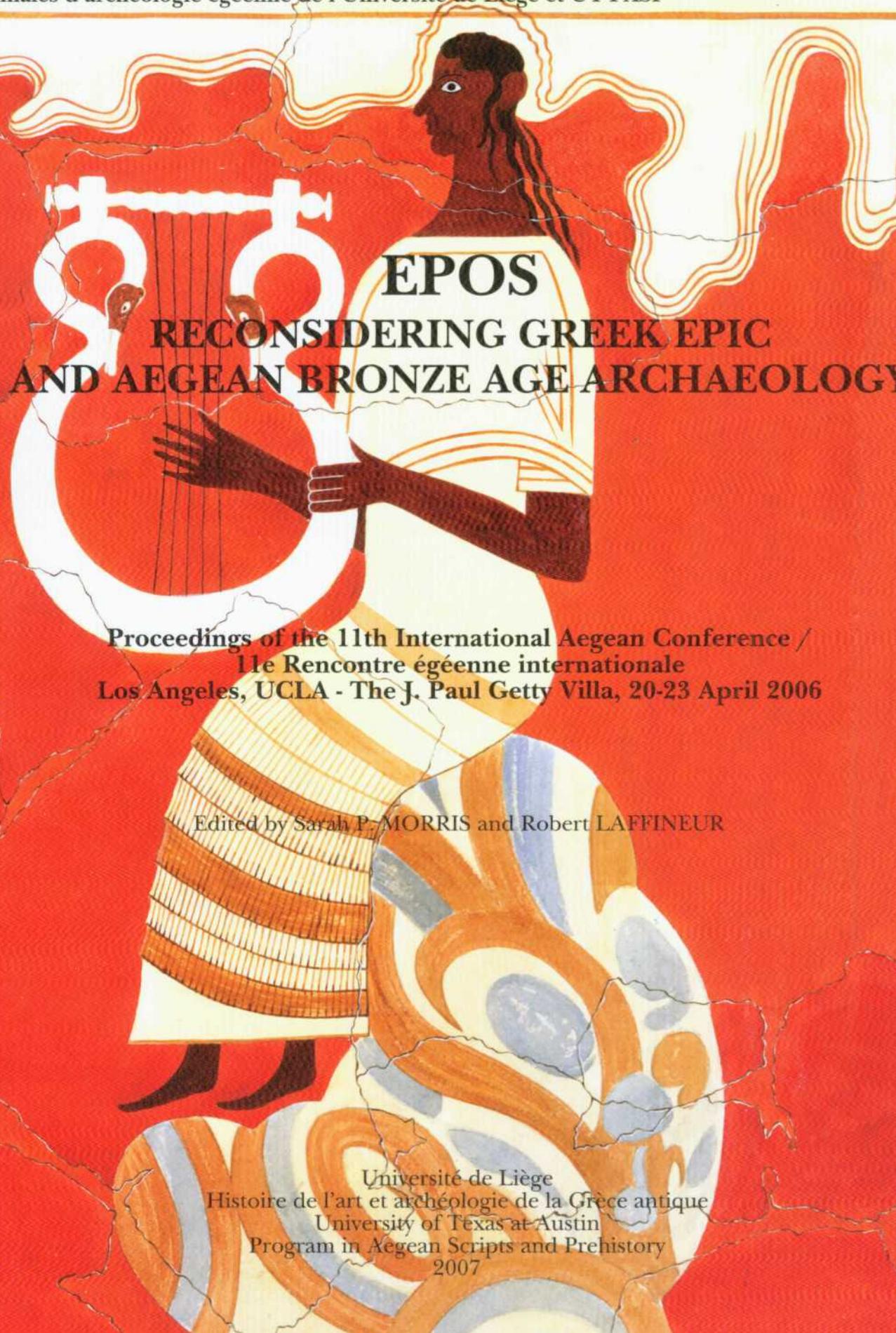


AEGAEUM 28

Annales d'archéologie égéenne de l'Université de Liège et UT-PASP



EPOS
RECONSIDERING GREEK EPIC
AND AEGEAN BRONZE AGE ARCHAEOLOGY

**Proceedings of the 11th International Aegean Conference /
11e Rencontre égéenne internationale**
Los Angeles, UCLA - The J. Paul Getty Villa, 20-23 April 2006

Edited by Sarah P. MORRIS and Robert LAFFINEUR

Université de Liège
Histoire de l'art et archéologie de la Grèce antique
University of Texas at Austin
Program in Aegean Scripts and Prehistory
2007

AEGAEUM 28

Annales d'archéologie égéenne de l'Université de Liège et UT-PASP

EPOS

RECONSIDERING GREEK EPIC AND AEGEAN BRONZE AGE ARCHAEOLOGY

**Proceedings of the 11th International Aegean Conference /
11e Rencontre égéenne internationale
Los Angeles, UCLA - The J. Paul Getty Villa, 20-23 April 2006**

Edited by Sarah P. MORRIS and Robert LAFFINEUR

Université de Liège
Histoire de l'art et archéologie de la Grèce antique
University of Texas at Austin
Program in Aegean Scripts and Prehistory
2007

POETRY IN MOTION: CANAANITE RULERSHIP AND AEGEAN NARRATIVE ART AT TEL KABRI*

Fragmentary and often debated, the evidence of Minoan/Cycladic miniature narrative fresco art is still the most significant for the existence of Aegean epic(s) during the second millennium BCE.¹ In her innovative 1989 article, Sarah Morris argued that "...the Thera frieze might be perceived as a chapter in the History of Aegean narrative, beyond its generic panorama of Aegean life."²

However, miniature frescoes are not common in the Aegean world, and even less common outside the Aegean area. They are found at only four sites within the Aegean: Knossos (Grandstand, sacred Grove and Dance frescoes); Tylissos House A; Akrotiri West House; and Ayia Irini. The discovery, by Kempinski and Niemeier, of a fragmentary miniature wall fresco within a large Middle Bronze Age Canaanite palace at Kabri (Pl. XXXVIIIa) is therefore an important addition to the corpus, and is the first to be found outside the Aegean region.

We fully accept Niemeier and Niemeier's conclusion that "...the style and iconography of the Alalakh, Tell el-Dab'a and Kabri frescoes are consistent with those of genuine Aegean fresco paintings and very different from anything else known from the Levant and Egypt."³ The style of the Kabri frescoes has been thoroughly discussed by many prominent scholars, including Niemeier and Niemeier, Sherratt, Hankey, Rehak, and others.

However, very little has been said about their *meaning* to the Canaanite elite commissioning them, apart from considering them to be an exotic prestige item, enhancing the standing of the commissioning ruler as one possessing esoteric knowledge of far-away regions.⁴ Furthermore, it has not been explained why — at Kabri — the Syrian artistic tradition, dedicated to glorifying the king, was abandoned in favor of the Aegean style, which is notorious for the implicit, or even the invisibility, of depictions of rulers.

Therefore, in this paper we shall combine evidence from the excavations of Kempinski and Niemeier with the first results from our renewed field project and regional study, in order to produce a preliminary portrait of the Canaanite ruler of Kabri and his times, and to suggest some possible reasons for the commissioning of such an Aegean narrative fresco.

The Renewed Kabri excavations

In the Summer of 2005, excavations in the palace of Kabri were resumed by the current authors. Three different areas were excavated, in order to establish the extent of the palace and to determine a field strategy for the future (Pl. XXXVIIIb). These were as follows:

* We are grateful to the organizers of this conference for the invitation to participate. The 2005 season at Tel Kabri was led by Assaf YASUR-LANDAU (Tel Aviv University) and Eric H. CLINE (The George Washington University). Funding was provided by the Institute for Aegean Prehistory, The George Washington University, and Tel Aviv University. The work of W.-D. NIEMEIER and the late A. KEMPINSKI, now published in final form by N. SCHEFTELOWITZ and R. OREN as A. KEMPINSKI, *Tel Kabri: The 1986-1993 Excavation Seasons* (2002), are a constant source of inspiration to our excavations.

1 S.P. MORRIS, "A Tale of Two Cities: The Miniature Frescoes from Thera and the Origins of Greek Poetry," *AJA* 93 (1989) 511-535; EAD., "Homer and the Near East," in *New Companion to Homer* 600-624; S. TESSY, "The Miniature Frieze of Thera: The Transubstantiation of Religious Beliefs," in S. SHERRATT (ed.), *Proceedings of the First International Symposium: The Wall Paintings of Thera* (2000) 437-452.

2 MORRIS (*supra* n. 1, 1989)522.

3 B. NIEMEIER and W.-D. NIEMEIER, "The Frescoes in the Middle Bronze Age Palace," in *Tel Kabri* (*supra* n. *) 281.

4 B. NIEMEIER and W.-D. NIEMEIER, "Aegean Frescoes in Syria-Palestine: Alalakh and Tel Kabri," in *The Wall Paintings of Thera* (*supra* n. 1) 793.

1. D West: the area of the possible throne room, close to the findspot of the frescoes and the supposed northern closing wall of the palace;
2. D South: in the area of the presumed southern court of the palace;⁵
3. D North: outside the palace, according to Kempinski's reconstruction;⁶ now lying between the avocado trees.

In area D West, the wall which was identified by the previous excavators as the northern external wall of the MB palace was found to actually be a Byzantine terrace,⁷ below which a four-meter-thick *internal* wall of the palace was found (Pl. XXXIXa).

In area D North, we found that the plaster floors of the palace continue farther to the east, lying below the avocado trees. This indicates that the Middle Bronze (MB) IIB palace is considerably larger than originally estimated by the previous excavators. It is at least 3000-4000 sq. m., rather than 2000 sq. m., and extends farther to the north, east, and west than previously thought.

In areas D North and D South, destruction deposits, including restorable local pottery, burnt organic material, and imported Cypriot pottery, were discovered. These provide further chronological data for dating the violent destruction of the palace to the MB IIC period, rather than to the LB I period, as was previously suggested.

The end of the Kabri palace was dated by the previous excavators by virtue of an amphora made of chocolate on white ware discovered in the palace.⁸ This pottery style begins in the later MB IIB (or MB IIG) period and continues to the LB Ib period.⁹ At Tell el-Dab'a, a sherd termed "proto-Chocolate on White" was assigned by Fischer to stratum e/2: the late Hyksos period or very early 18th dynasty.¹⁰ In addition, Cypriot White-Painted (WP) V vessels, including zoomorphic ones, were found in the palace at Kabri during the previous excavations.¹¹ Based on the pottery from the palace, as well as from tomb 903 which also yielded two scarabs with the name of the Hyksos ruler *Yakebamw*, Kempinski, Gershuni and Scheftelowitz dated the end of phase 3 of the palace to the MB II period, and more specifically to the 17th century BCE.¹² However neither the pottery nor the scarabs can be dated exclusively to the 17th century, and can very likely also belong to the 16th century BCE.

Another indication for the end of phase 3 is given by the Cypriot pottery discovered at Kabri. At Tell el-Dab'a, Cypriot Base Ring (BR) I ware and White Slip (WS) I ware both make their first appearance in stratum d.¹³ This is the very stratum which yielded the Minoan paintings (near Palace F), and which is now dated by Bietak to the early 18th dynasty, during the early years of the joint reign of Thutmose III and Hatshepsut.¹⁴ In contrast, no Cypriot BR I or WS I ware has yet been found among the abundant Cypriot sherds in the palace at Kabri,

5 R. OREN, "Area D," in *Tel Kabri...* (*supra* n. *) 61-63, 66-67.

6 *Ibid*: fig. 4.73.

7 Wall 691; *ibid*: fig. 4.69.

8 A. KEMPINSKI, L. GERSHUNI, and N. SCHEFTALOWITZ, "Pottery: III. Middle Bronze Age," in *Tel Kabri...*, (*supra* n. *) 116, fig. 5.26.

9 P.M. FISCHER, "Chocolate-On-White Ware: Further Observations and Radiocarbon Dates," *Egypt and the Levant* XIII (2004) 57.

10 P.M. FISCHER, "Chocolate-on-White Ware from Tell el-Dab'a," in E. CZERNY *et al.* (eds), *Timelines. Studies in Honour of Manfred Bietak* (2006) II 103-110.

11 KEMPINSKI, GERSHUNI, and SCHEFTALOWITZ (*supra* n. 8) fig. 5.55.

12 *Ibid* 120.

13 M. BIETAK, "Relative and Absolute Chronology of the Middle Bronze Age: Comments on the Present State of Research," in M. BIETAK (ed.), *The Middle Bronze Age in the Levant. Proceedings of an International Conference on MB IIA Ceramic Material. Vienna 24th-26th of January 2001* (2002) 41; P. FUSCALDO, "The Base-Ring Wares from the Palace Complex at Tell el-Dab'a (Ezbat Helmi, Areas H/HI and H/VI)," *Egypt and the Levant* XIII (2004) 71; M. BIETAK and I. HEIN, "The Context of White Slip Wares in the Stratigraphy of Tell el-Dab'a and some Conclusions on Aegean Chronology," in Y. KARAGEORGHIS, E. CZERNY and LA. TODD (eds), *The White Slip Ware of Late Bronze Age Cyprus. Proceedings of an International Conference Organized by the Anastasios G. Leventis Foundation, Nicosia in Honour of Malcolm Wiener, Nicosia, 29th-30th October 1998* (2001) 172; M. BIETAK, "The Setting of the Minoan Wall Paintings at Avaris," in L. MORGAN (ed.), *Aegean Wall Painting. A Tribute to Mark Cameron* (2005) fig. 3.2.

14 BIETAK (*supra* n. 13, 2005) 83; ID., "The Thutmoseid Stronghold of Pernufer," *Egyptian Archaeology* 26 (2005) 13-17.

nor indeed among the dozens of Cypriot sherds and vessels found elsewhere at the site.¹⁵ This would suggest that the paintings at Kabri must be dated earlier than the paintings at Tell el-Dab'a, i.e. prior to the early 18th dynasty. Moreover, since WS I ware first appears in LB Ia contexts in the southern Levant,¹⁶ the present evidence suggests that the palace at Kabri was destroyed before Palace F and its Minoanizing frescoes was built at Tell el-Dab'a.

We have not yet found any additional fragments of wall fresco, despite the fact that we have completed the excavation of the room near the entrance of which the frescoes were deposited. However, we have found evidence that suggests the "use phase" of the frescoes in the palace should be redated.

The fragments of wall fresco were found by Kempinski and Niemeier in and next to Threshold 698, located between Hall 611 and Room 740, where they had been reused as packing material (Pl. XXXIXb). This fill was set in place after the ashlar blocks of the threshold orthostats in Hall 611 were removed.¹⁷ Niemeier suggested that the fragments of the wall fresco were used to fill the gap caused by the removal of the orthostats from Hall 611 during a "squatter phase" dating to sometime *after* Phase 3c.¹⁸ However, we would like to suggest an alternative option, that the deposition of the fresco fragments was not the work of looters, as has been previously suggested, but rather was conducted during a major renovation project within the lifetime of the palace.

We have discovered that the walls of Room 740, perhaps to be identified as the throne room, were considerably thickened at some point in time, effectively halving the area of the room, and no doubt changing its use (Pl. XL). This created an unusually deep threshold (i.e. Threshold 698), which was not paved with ashlar orthostats, unlike elsewhere in the palace, but rather was deliberately filled with the fallen fresco fragments.

During the same time, as already noted by Kempinski and others,¹⁴ two new walls (W618 and W645) were constructed, cutting the large room to the NE of Hall 611 into two smaller rooms (607 and 667) and thus also altering its use. The threshold between them was, similarly to 698, also not paved with orthostats. We believe that these drastic renovations to Rooms 740, 607, and 667 are linked to a change in the use of Hall 611. We would therefore suggest that renovations were also made to Hall 611 during this same period of construction, resulting in the removal of the orthostats, followed by the deposition and reuse of the fresco fragments as packing material underneath Threshold 698 and within a gap left by the removal of the orthostats from the interior wall of Hall 611. This major renovation to the palace, which either included or immediately postdated the removal and destruction of the wall frescoes, and which include the thickening of the walls around Room 611 to ca. four meters wide, could not have been carried out by squatters living in the palace after its destruction.

If our reconstruction is correct, the original painted floor and the wall fresco do not simply belong to the phase after the renovation of the palace (Kempinski's Phase 3c), but date instead to a phase before the renovation. It is during the renovation that the wall fresco is torn down and reused as packing material under Threshold 698 and elsewhere.

15 KEMPINSKI, GERSHUNI, and SCHEFTALOWITZ (*supra* n. 8) 117-120.

16 E.D. OREN, "Early White Slip Pottery in Canaan: Spatial and Chronological Perspectives," in *The White Slip Ware* (*supra* n. 13) 142. Thus, for example, Cypriot Bichrome Wheelmade Ware appears at Tell el-'Ajjul together with White Slip I and Cypriot Red on Black Ware at horizon H4 (P.M. FISCHER and M. SADEQ, "Tell el-'Ajjul 1999. A Joint Palestinian-Swedish Field Project: First Season Preliminary Report," *Egypt and the Levant X* [2000] 224-225, figs. 11:3 [bichrome], 11: 4 [Red on Black]). FISCHER and SADEQ argue that the co-appearance of Red on Black and White Slip I dates H4 to Late Cypriot IA2 (i.e. 1550/1540-1525/1500 BCE).

17 OREN (*supra* n. 5) 63; NIEMEIER and NIEMEIER (*supra* n. 3) 254.

18 W.-D. NIEMEIER, "Tel Kabri: Aegean Fresco Paintings in a Canaanite Palace," in S. GITIN and M. ARTZY (eds), *Recent Excavations in Israel, a View to the West: Reports on Kabri, Nami, Miqne-Ekron, Dor, and Ashkelon, Archaeological Institute of America, Colloquia and Conference Papers*. Vol. 1 (1995) 7-8; NIEMEIER and NIEMEIER (*supra* n. 4) 780.

19 A. KEMPINSKI and A. ROSENBERGER, "Area D. A. Architecture and Stratigraphy," in *Excavations In Kabri. Preliminary Report of 1991 Season*. *6 (1992) 11; A. KEMPINSKI, A. ROSENBERGER, and S. GIVEON, "Areas D-F: The Architecture, Stratigraphy, and Finds," in *Excavations In Kabri. Preliminary Report of 1990 Season*. *5 (1991) 11.

In sum, the evidence of the Cypriote pottery found in the palace, and elsewhere at Kabri, puts the end of the last phase of the palace — phase 3c (the Middle Bronze Age) — perhaps prior to the beginning of the 18th dynasty in Egypt. However, dating the removal and deposition of the Kabri frescoes to *before* phase 3d results in a new, and earlier, relative chronology for the frescoes at Tel Kabri. We would tentatively suggest that the "use" period of the frescoes, i.e. the time when the frescoes were actually attached to the wall and served to decorate the interior of the palace, was during the pre-renovation phase of the palace, which is dated to the middle part of the MB IIB period. Although much additional work is needed to pinpoint the absolute chronology of the Kabri frescoes, our suggested redating of the frescoes in the palace at Tel Kabri would make them considerably earlier than the Tell el-Dab'a Thutmose frescoes, and perhaps nearly contemporary with the Acrotiri frescoes on Santorini, which they so closely resemble.²⁰

Iconography of Rulership at Mari and in the Levant in contrast to the Aegean

The palaces themselves, as well as their decoration and palatial figurative art in the Middle Bronze Age, reflect the power ideology of the rulers. Thus, Margueron argues that the palace of Mari "...is the expression of the political system that it magnifies: it shapes the space for the benefit and glory of the king, it establishes an environment dedicated to glorifying him."²¹ And indeed, the artistic programs everywhere in the palace of Mari were heavily concerned with the interaction between rulership and the divine.²² For example, in the chapel of Ishtar (room 132), dating back to the *sakkanakku* period (20th century BCE), the ruler is involved in an offering scene to the goddess and presenting a libation to Sin, the moon god.²³

Those who were granted an audience with the king in his throne room were paraded through iconography glorifying the ruler and his divine sanction. First, they waited in the Court of the Palms (room 106), which contained the famous scene of investiture in which the goddess Ishtar is shown giving the ruler the insignia of power: the ring and the rod.²⁴ Other scenes in the same court included a sacrificial scene, in which a giant king dwarfs the other participants in the procession.²⁵ The symbolism of the divine sanction continued in the next room, the vestibule to the throne room, in which a goddess on a podium issued purifying water.²⁶ Finally, the magnificently large throne room itself drew all attention to the throne on the podium and to the ruler who sat upon it.²⁷ Even the private apartments of the king on the second floor were covered in murals adoring and praising the personae of the ruler, including hunting exploits, military victories, and homage giving.²⁸

-
- 20 As for the Alalakh frescoes, the Kabri paintings may be contemporary, later, or even earlier, due to the uncertainty of the absolute, historically-derived date for the destruction of Alalakh VII. Cf. M.-H.C. GATES, "Alalakh and Chronology Again," in *High, Middle or Low?* (1987) Part 2 75: "Were it not for the association of Hattushili I with the destruction of Alalakh VII. I submit that there would be no quarrel over dating it at the very close of the Middle Bronze Age, in the first quarter of the 16th century B.C., with VI continuing into the middle of the 16th c." The date given by Gates, based on the middle chronology, is 1650/30 BCE for stratum VII, followed by a brief gap from 1580/1575 BCE and then stratum VI A at 1575-1550 BCE. However, as shown by BIETAK (*supra* n. 13, 2004) 205, the destruction of stratum VII can be dated to the 16th century, using a low chronology date of 1564 or even a very low chronology date of 1532 BCE for the incursion of Hattushili I.
- 21 J.-C. MARGUERON, "Mari: A Portrait in Art of a Mesopotamian City-State." in J.M. SASSON (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. II (1995) 898.
- 22 J.-C. MARGUERON, *Mari, metropole de l'Euphrate* (2004) 512; I.J. WINTER, "Thera Paintings and the Ancient Near East: The Private and Public Domains of Wall Paintings." in *The Wall Paintings of Thera* (*supra* n. 1) 748
- 23 A. PAROT, *Mission archeologique de Mari. Volume II. Le Palais. ** Peintures murales* (1958) pl. E; MARGUERON (*supra* n. 22) 408-409.
- 24 MARGUERON (*supra* n. 21) 893-895.
- 25 PAROT (*supra* n. 23) Pl. B; MARGUERON (*supra* n. 21) 892; MARGUERON (*supra* n. 22) 509-510.
- 26 MARGUERON (*supra* n. 21) 896.
- 27 MARGUERON (*supra* n. 22) 478-479.
- 28 MARGUERON (*supra* n. 21) 897; MARGUERON (*supra* n. 22) pl. 63, 511.

Iconography in Middle Bronze Age Palestine shows much similarity to Syrian iconography of approximately the same period, not least in the strong tendency to depict a clear portrayal of power focusing on the central figure: either the ruler himself or a deity. For instance, in Syria, monumental art containing multiple figures was almost entirely preoccupied with the persona of the ruler; thus we see that the most elaborate scenes from MB II Ebla, especially those carved on the limestone and basalt basins, depict royal banquets, presided over by the ruler.²⁹ Similarly, in Palestine, almost all artistic media were aimed towards depictions of the ruler, including a statue and an LBI bronze plaque from Hazor, stelai from Shechem and Tell Beit Mirsim, scarabs from Barkai, Jericho and elsewhere, and cylinder seals belonging to the "green jasper group" from Tell el-'Ajjul, Tell el-Far'a and Tell Bēt Mirsim.³⁰

In contrast, Middle Bronze Age Aegean art does not clearly depict any ruler.³¹ Unlike the art of Mesopotamia and Egypt,³² Aegean art does not have the "perspective of importance" showing more important figures, such as depicting the ruler larger than the rest of the people.³³ Even if a king is present in the miniature fresco from the West House, as argued by Marinatos,³⁴ his presence is far from being conspicuous. The reason for this discrepancy is debated, but may be due to a peculiar Minoan governing system based on a collective of decision makers, rather than an absolute monarchy.³⁵

Rulership at Kabri

During the Middle Bronze Age, large centers in the area of the Galilee, such as Hazor and Ijon, and in the immediate vicinity of Kabri, such as Akko and Mishal (Tel Keisan), are cited by the Egyptians in the later (Posner) Group of the Execration Texts as each having a single ruler. It is very likely that Kabri had a similar rulership system.³⁶

Furthermore, if Kabri is indeed the *Rehob* mentioned in the Execration Texts, we also know the name of one of its rulers. The king at Kabri/*Rehob* had a distinctly Amorite name, Yakmus-'Amu (ya-k-m-s-'-mu).³⁷ Amorite kingship at Kabri had a long history during the Middle Bronze Age, for the palace at Kabri itself, the very center of the king's power, had a continuous

29 P. MATTHIAE, F. PINNOCK, and G.S. MATTHIAE, *Ebla. Alle origini della civiltà urbana* (1995) 421-422; P. BECK, *Imagery and Representation. Studies in the Art and Iconography of Ancient Palestine: Collected Articles* (2002) 60.

30 Statue from Hazor (P. BECK, "Stone Ritual Artifacts and Statues from Areas A and H at Ha/or," in *Hazor III-IV, Text. An Account of the Third and Fourth Seasons of Excavations, 1957-1958* [1989] pl. CCCXXX); LBI bronze plaque (ID., "The Bronze Plaque from Hazor," *IEJ* 33 [1983] 78-80); stelai from Shechem and Tell Beit Mirsim (BECK [*supra* n. 29] figs. 27-28); scarabs from Barkai, Jericho and elsewhere (BECK [*supra* n. 29] 79; O. KEEL and C. UEHLINGER, *Gods, goddesses and images of god in ancient Israel* [1998] 43-45); cylinder seals (BECK [*supra* n. 29] figs. 14-16).

31 E.g. E.N. DAVIS, "Art and Politics in the Aegean: The Missing Ruler," in *POLITEIA* 11-20; R.B. KOEHL, "The Nature of Minoan Kingship," in P. REHAK (ed.), *The Role of the Ruler in the Prehistoric Aegean. Proceedings of a Panel Discussion presented at the Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America, New Orleans, Louisiana, 28 December 1992*, *Aegaeum* 11(1995)23-35.

32 M. BIETAK, "The Mode of Representation in Egyptian Art in Comparison to Aegean Bronze Age Art," in *The Wall Paintings of Thera* (*supra* n. 1) 235.

33 An exception is the Campstool fresco (BIETAK [*supra* n. 32] 235), which should be given a post-neopalatial date of LM IIIA2 (S. HOOD, "Cretan Fresco Dates," in *The Wall Paintings of Thera* [*supra* n. 1] 206), reflecting Mycenaean influences.

34 N. MARINATOS, "Divine Kingship in Minoan Crete," in *The Role of the Ruler* (*supra* n. 31) 37-48.

35 J. DRIESSEN, "'The King must Die.' Some Observations on the Use of Minoan Court Compounds," in J. DRIESSEN, I. SCHOEP and R. LAFFINEUR (eds), *Monuments of Minos. Rethinking the Minoan Palaces. Proceedings of the International Workshop "Crete of the hundred Palaces?," Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve, 14-15 December 2001*, *Aegaeum* 23 (2002) 1-14.

36 A.F. RAINEY and R.S. NOTLEY, *The Sacred Bridge. Carta S Atlas of the Biblical World* (2006) 52; W.G. DEVER, "The Rise of Complexity in the Land of Israel in the Early Second Millennium B.C.E.," in A. BRIAN, J. AVIRAM, and A. PARIS-SHADUR (eds), *Biblical Archaeology Today, 1990. Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Biblical Archaeology. Pre-Congress Symposium: Population, Production and Power. Jerusalem, June 1990* (1993) 105-106.

37 E14; RAINEY and NOTLEY (*supra* n. 36) 58; R. FRANKEL, N. GETZOV, M. AVIAM, and A. DAGANI, *Settlement Dynamics and Regional Diversity in Ancient Upper Galilee. Archaeological Survey of Upper Galilee* (2001)143."

history spanning centuries. The earlier, and now our renewed, excavations have demonstrated that the palace — or a proto-palace — existed at Kabri already in the MB IIA period.³⁸

In addition to everything already mentioned above, during the 2005 season at Tel Kabri, we found — in area D North — both plaster floors and walls lying directly below those of the MB IIB palace. It is clear that these are from an earlier palace at Kabri, which is quite possibly just as large as the final one.

Each MB II polity created its own landscape of power with regard to the ruler, which was manifested in monumental architecture. Massive earthen ramparts were built around the central settlement, requiring the extensive efforts of hundreds and even thousands of workers.³⁹ At Kabri, as at other sites, these works were so massive that they changed forever the shape of the tell. As such, besides their use as fortifications, they also had an ideological value — an everlasting demonstration of the power of the ruler to mobilize manpower and to physically change the landscape of his kingdom.

During the height of its power, the 32 ha. site of Kabri ruled a territory extending from the Carmel ridge in the south to the Sulam ridge on the north, with at least 31 smaller sites and ca. 30,000 inhabitants under its control.⁴⁰ These included secondary fortified cities, such as the 15 ha. site of Acco, the 7.5 ha. site of Achziv, and the site of Tel Aphek (north). Even some tertiary sites were heavily fortified, such as the 3.2 ha. Tell Avdon, which was strengthened with a glacis.

The power of the king extended beyond the walls of Kabri, of course. The open cult place at the coastal site of Nahariya,⁴¹ used for the cult of mariners, was doubtlessly under the protection of the king of Kabri (Pl. XLIa). This area was watched over by a fort,⁴² most likely a harbour fort, which would have defended the traded goods which poured into the kingdom from Cyprus and elsewhere.

If the tell of Kabri dominated the landscape of the plain, and the Nahariya shrine and fort was a landmark for those who came by sea, the fort of Ein Tamir reflected the power of the rulership in the mountainous region.⁴³ Spectacularly located above Nahal Khziv, and very close to the later Crusader fort of Montfor (Pl. XLIIb), Ein Tamir may have been either a large border fortress or a summer residence; either would have served the king of Kabri well.

If we may go a bit further afield, the similarity in the structure of power between the polities in Middle Bronze Age Syria and the polity at Kabri is best observed in the functional aspects of the design of the innermost loci of power in both areas — namely, the rooms around the throne room. Kempinski had already noted the great similarity between the central part of the palace of Kabri and that of the Alalakh VII palace, possibly related to a Mesopotamian prototype such as Mari.⁴⁴ In these palaces, a central court leads through a series of vestibules to a ceremonial room; at Kabri, according to Kempinski, this was room 611, which was decorated with the Minoan-style painted fresco floor. In addition, the position of the staircases was found in both palaces in close proximity to the ceremonial rooms. At Mari, these led to the royal private suites on the second floor.⁴⁵ We postulate that the same situation probably existed at Kabri.

38 OREN (*supra* n. 5) 68.

39 A.A. BURKE, *The Architecture of Defence: Fortified Settlements of the Levant during the Middle Bronze Age* (2003); S. BUNIMOVITZ, "The Middle Bronze Age Fortifications in Palestine as a Social Phenomenon," *Tel Aviv* 19 (1992) 221-234; I. FINKELSTEIN, "Middle Bronze Age 'Fortifications': A Reflection of Social Organization and Political Formations," *Tel Aviv* 19 (1992) 201-220.

40 M. PEILSTÖKER, *The Plain of Akko from the Beginning of the Early Bronze Age to the End of the Middle Bronze Age. A Historical Geography of the Plain of Akko from 3500-1550 BC: a Spatial Analysis* (2003) 422-428 considers only the lowland sites of this kingdom.

41 I. BEN-DOR, "A Middle Bronze Age Temple in Nahariya," *QDAP* 14 (1950) 1-41; M. DOTHAN, "The Nahariya Temple," in *NEAEHL* (1993) 1090-1092; FRANKEL *et al.* (*supra* n. 37) 10 no. 6.

42 FRANKEL *et al.* (*supra* n. 37) 10 no. 5; PEILSTÖKER (*supra* n. 40) 343-364.

43 N. GETZOV, "A Middle Bronze Age II Fort on the Naqar Ridge in Western Galilee," *'Atiqot* XXXIX (1990) 1*-6* (Hebrew); FRANKEL *et al.* (*supra* n. 37) 28 no. 199.

44 A. KEMPINSKI, "The Hyksos: A view from Northern Canaan and Syria," in E.D. OREN (ed.), *The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives* (1997) 327-334.

45 MARGUERON (*supra* n. 22) Pl. 61, 62.

A further glimpse into the power politics practiced by the Kabri rulership can be seen in a locally-made serpentine cylinder seal (Pl. XLIIa).⁴⁶ Found in room 603, it depicts a row of couching captives, their hands bound behind their backs. Such imagery of victory and vanquished enemies was no doubt borrowed from Egyptian prototypes.⁴⁷

Another example of imported elite ideology was discovered at Kabri within Tomb 984, dating to the MB IIA period. Within this tomb was found a cylinder seal carved in the Syrian style of the 18th century BCE, depicting an elite couple (possibly rulers?) making an offering to the goddess Ishtar.⁴⁸

Belonging to a Mediterranean Narrative

It seems permissible, therefore, to hypothesize that the landscape of the kingdom of Kabri, as well as its fortification and its palace architecture, and even the seal iconography, reflects a typical Middle Bronze Age Syro-Canaanite type of rulership. If so, why did the ruler of Kabri choose to break the region's deep-rooted artistic tendency toward an iconographic tradition which centered around the king, and to choose instead an Aegean iconographic style in which kingship is either absent or is portrayed in a notoriously elusive manner in both wall paintings and floor decoration?

Aren Maeir has described several gateway sites in the Levant during the Middle Bronze Age. The most important of these were Hazor and Tell el-Dab'a.⁴⁹ Hazor, located in the north-eastern Galilee, was thought to be the most important trade gateway junction in Palestine, perhaps including even southern Syria and northern Transjordan.⁵⁰ Its role was crucial in international trading routes running from Mesopotamia, especially the site of Mari, to both Syria and northern Palestine. Similarly, Tell el-Dab'a was the most important gateway in the south, a point of entry for goods going to and coming from Egypt.

Kabri was quite possibly the main gateway on the northern coast of Israel, and may have been the most powerful coastal polity besides the southern polity of Ashkelon.⁵¹ The vast quantities of Cypriot pottery found at Kabri, and in neighboring sites such as Tel Aphek (Kurdani), as well as the harbor at Acco, show that it was also connected to maritime trade,⁵² unlike Hazor. However, despite its prominent position on the southern Levantine littoral, Kabri was but a secondary player compared to the huge international powers of Hazor and Tell el-Dab'a.

Therefore, the king of Kabri is unlikely to have had the means to acquire and commission the highest forms of Syrian art, as did the ruler of Hazor. Nor could he compete with the resources of a kingdom such as Hazor, which had a center more than twice the size of Kabri (ca. 80 ha.) and with "old money" (centuries-old wealth) resulting from continuous trade with Mesopotamia.

Similarly, the king of Kabri did not have direct access to all the artistic riches of Egypt, as did the Hyksos rulers,⁵³ nor to the immense wealth of the trading port at Avaris in the Nile

46 KEMPINSKI (*supra n. **) fig. 9.8.

47 Cf. plaque from Tell el-Ajjul: F. PETRIE, *Ancient Gaza II* (1932) Pl. XXIV: 3.

48 A. KEMPINSKI. "A Syrian Cylinder Seal from Tomb 984 at Tel Kabri," in M.J. MELLINK *et al.* (eds), *Anatolia and Its Neighbors: Studies in Honor of Nimet Ozguc* (1993) 333-338.

49 A.M. MAEIR, "The Political and Economic Status of MB II Hazor and MB II Trade: An Inter- and Intra-regional View," *PEQ* 132 (2000) 37-58.

50 D. ILAN, "The Dawn of Internationalism: The Middle Bronze Age," in T.E. LEVY (ed.), *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* (1995) 306; MAEIR (*supra n. 49*) 43-45.

51 MAEIR (*supra n. 49*) 43; ILAN (*supra n. 50*).

52 A. RABAN, "The Post City of Akko in the MBII," *Michamanim* 5 (1991) 17*-34*; ID., "Minoan and Canaanite Harbors," in R. LAFFINEUR and L. BASCH (eds), *Thalassa. L'Egee prehistorique et la mer. Actes de la 3^e Rencontre egeenne internationale de l'Universite de Liege. Station de recherches sous-marines et oceanographiques, Calvi, Corse, 23-25 avril 1990. Aegaeum* 7 (1991) 129-146; PEILSTOKER (*supra n. 40*) pl. 6.15; MAEIR (*supra n. 49*) 44.

53 As seen in the magnificent example of the head of an Asiatic ruler (M. BIETAK, *Avaris, The Capital of the Hyksos. Recent Excavations at Tell el-Dab'a* [1996] fig. 17).

Delta, conquered by Kamose with "...hundreds of ships of fresh cedar wood filled with gold, lapis, silver, turquoise..."⁵⁴

Since he could not defeat, or compete with, the other rulers in their own playground, the main venue left for attracting the attention of his peers was to innovate, and one way to do this was to abandon the traditional milieu of Syrian and Egyptianized artistic tradition. The choice in Aegean art was therefore deliberate — obviously so — and demonstrates contacts which most other polities did not have. Since Kabri was a secondary power, its king probably could not commission one of the top Knossian fresco artists, as Thutmose III may have done at Tell el-Dab'a. Nor, we believe, would he have been able to get such artists as a diplomatic gift,⁵⁵ as other more powerful rulers were able to do.

The close resemblance of the Kabri fresco to that of the West House in Santorini, as noted already by Niemeier and Niemeier,⁵⁶ may point us to the origin of the artist. We agree with Negbi, who has suggested that a Cycladic artisan was responsible for painting the Kabri palace.⁵⁷ Commissioning such an artist with his island iconography,⁵⁸ even one who may have decorated the houses of the wealthy on Thera, Kea or elsewhere, would have required far less political leverage than would have been needed for Knossian artisans. This hypothesized Cycladic artist may even have been itinerant,⁵⁹ perhaps recruited through Cypriot middlemen trading with Kabri.

Traveling Epics and Miniature Art

Epics travel well in the ancient Near East, as the Egyptian legend of Astarte and the tribute of the Sea, a legend with Ugaritic or even Hurrian ancestry,⁶⁰ shows, or the Epic of Gilgamesh, copies of which have been found from Mesopotamia to Megiddo.⁶¹

Similarly, miniature narrative art, possibly relating to an early epic tradition, had a great appeal: it could serve as a unifying epos or epic cycle in the time of extended colonization and diaspora, for instance on Crete, Kea, and Santorini during the LM IA period, and it served somewhat as a membership card to a Mediterranean club of members who shared this tradition — a club which extended from the northern Cyclades to Crete and perhaps beyond.

Malkin has demonstrated how familiar experiences may result in a desire to share a myth. During the 8th and 7th centuries BCE, both Etruscans and Greeks were foreigners in Campania, being settlers and traders: "The colonial situation had lent itself to the application of myth to the new lands and newly encountered peoples. Greek myths of origin and travel seeped into Etruscan culture, perhaps among guest friends, together with the wine drunk at aristocratic symposia"⁶² The Etruscans embraced the image of Odysseus as UTUSE,⁶³ possibly as early as

54 D.B. REDFORD, "Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period," in *The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives* (*supra* n. 44) 14. See, however, a possible different decision by a local ruler (?), seen in Egyptianizing mural fragments in a public building in Tell Sakka, in the region of Damascus (P.M.M.G. AKKERMANS and G.M. SCHWARTZ, *The Archaeology of Syria. Cambridge* [2003] 318-319).

55 *Contra* NIEMEIER and NIEMEIER (*supra* n. 4) 793, who supported a reconstruction of a gift exchange in which Crete was involved. Such scenarios do not consider the chronological difference between Kabri and Tell el-Dab'a and the great difference in diplomatic importance between the Kingdom of Kabri and Egypt at the height of its power in the Thutmoside period.

56 NIEMEIER and NIEMEIER (*supra* n. 3); yet opposed by BIETAK (*supra* n. 13, 2004) 203.

57 O. NEGBI, "The 'Libyan Landscape' from Thera: A review of Aegean Enterprises Overseas in the Late Minoan IA Period," *JMA* 7.1 (1994) 73-112; note that the suggestion was opposed by NIEMEIER and NIEMEIER (*supra* n. 4) 972.

58 L. MORGAN, "Island Iconography. Thera, Kea, Milos," in D.A. HARDY (ed.), *Thera and the Aegean World III Vol. 1: Archaeology. Proceedings of the Third International Congress, Santorini, Greece, 3-9 September 1989* (1990) 252-266.

59 E.H. CLINE, "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor: Minoans and Mycenaean Abroad," in *POLITEIA* 265-287.

60 R.K. RITNER, "The Legend of Astarte and the Tribute of the Sea," in W.W. HALLO and K.L. YOUNGER (eds), *The Context of Scripture. Volume I. Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* (1997) 35-36

61 A. KEMPINSKI, *Megiddo. A City-State and Royal Centre in North Israel* (1989) pl. 262.

62 I. MALKIN, *The Returns of Odysseus: Colonization and Ethnicity* (1998) 170.

63 *Ibid* 171.

the 7th century BCE. West Greek narrative art, as the Aristonothos krater from Carea,⁶⁴ carried themes of epic poetry into the feasts of the Etruscan elite, and later into local iconography.

Similarly, the accompanying or underlying story to the Kabri fresco, perhaps told by the artist himself, undoubtedly dealt with sea voyages and coastal towns, and was one which would have been dear to the heart of a ruler of a coastal polity. Although the ruler of Kabri was not shown explicitly in the Aegean narrative fresco, or at least in the fragments which have been found so far, there would have been more than enough compensation in the landscapes portrayed. Supporting a narrative in a Mediterranean setting, the landmarks in the frescoes may well have struck a familiar cord in the hearts of the Canaanite observers: whitish-gray mountains, similar to the rugged limestone landscape so common in the upper Galilee; hills of reddish soil, similar to the terra rosa of the upper Galilee, which is deposited on hard limestone;⁶⁵ and reeds, similar to those in the marshes of the Na'aman. Even a coastal town could have been compared to Nahariya, Acco, or Akhziv, while the protruding beams on the roofs and below the windows are also features found in the monumental architecture of the Levant, as evident from a temple model from Megiddo stratum VII.⁶⁶

In reminding the commissioning ruler, as well as his select audience, of different parts of his kingdom, the wall painting at Kabri may also have stated a narrative of its own: that of the landscapes of a great kingdom to be, its center firmly anchored in the very rooms where the fresco was painted.

Eric H. CLINE and Assaf YASUR-LANDAU

64 J. BOARDMAN, *Early Greek Vase Painting* (1998) fig. 282.

65 S. RAVIKOVITZ, *Manual and Map of Soils in Israel* (Hebrew) (1969) photo 1 and map.

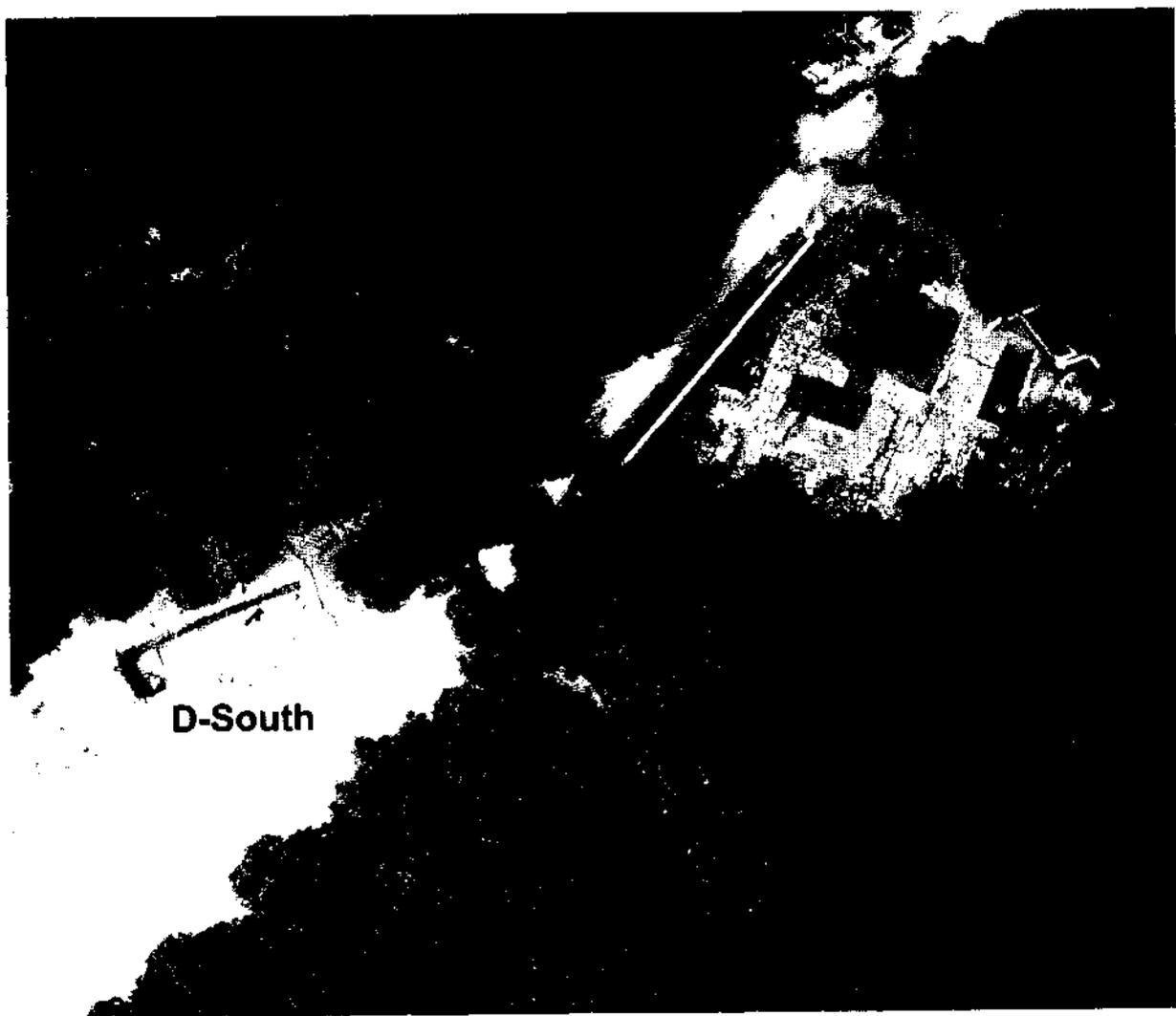
66 G. LOUD, *Megiddo IL Seasons of 1935-39* (1948) Pl. 251; A. KEMPINSKI, "Reconstructing the Canaanite Tower-Temple," *Eretz Israel* 20 (19989) 82-85 (Hebrew).

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Pl. XXXVIIIa Fragments from the Kabri Fresco (reconstruction by B. and W.D. Niemeier, conservation by R. Pelta, photograph by P. Shrago).
- Pl. XXXVIIIb Aerial photograph of the palace at Kabri, with the excavation areas of the 2005 season marked (Eric H. Cline and Assaf Yasur-Landau).
- Pl. XXXIXa Aerial photograph of the palace at Kabri, closeup of the central part of the palace and room 740 after the 2005 excavation season (Eric H. Cline and Assaf Yasur-Landau).
- Pl. XXXIXb The Palace of Kabri from above: Hall 611 and the entrance to room 740, the findspot of the miniature fresco (Eric H. Cline and Assaf Yasur-Landau).
- Pl. XL Area D: 2005 Phase Plan of the Palace (Prepared by Michal Beniada and Beata Jurkiewicz)
- Pl. XLIa The Nahariya Temple in 2005 (Eric H. Cline and Assaf Yasur-Landau).
- Pl. XLIb Nahal Khziv and the Monfor castle from the MBII fort at Ein Tamir (Eric H. Cline and Assaf Yasur-Landau).
- Pl. XLIIa Serpentine Cylinder Seal from Area D, Room 603 (after KEMPINSKI [*supra* n. *] fig. 9.8)
- Pl. XLIIb Greyish hills in the Kabri miniature Fresco (reconstruction by B. and W.D. Niemeier, conservation by R. Pelta, photograph by P. Shrago).
- Pl. XLIIIa Grey Limestone hill of Tell Avdon (Photo: George Pierce).
- Pl. XLIIIb Ships by coast in the Kabri miniature fresco (reconstruction by B. and W.D. Niemeier, conservation by R. Pelta, photograph by P. Shrago).

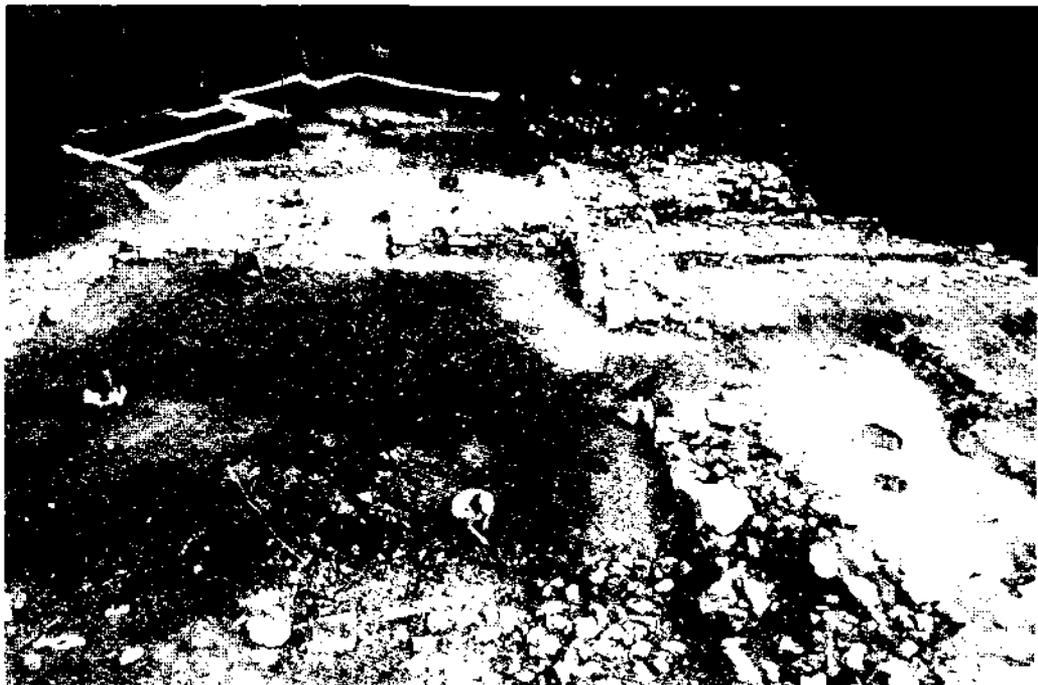
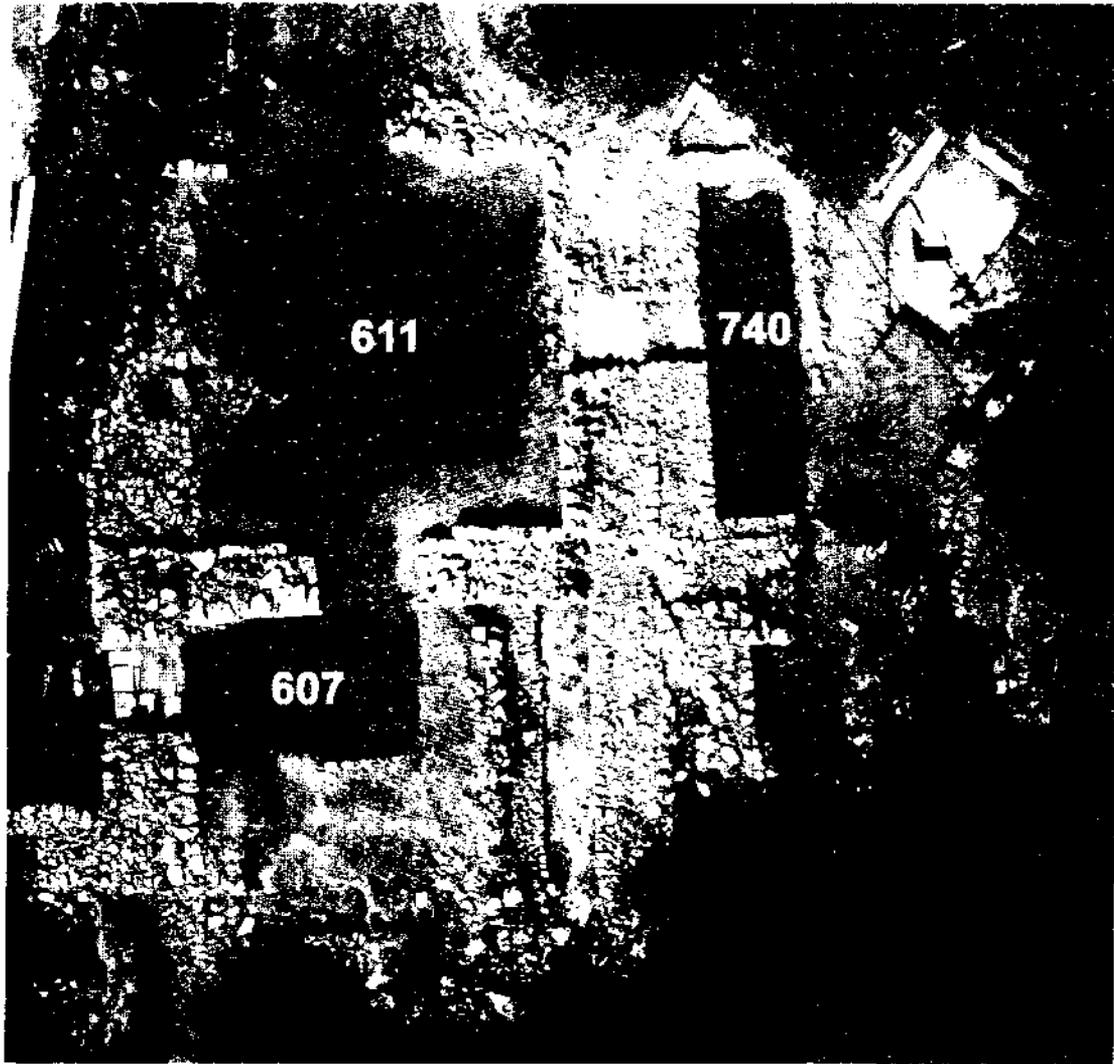


a



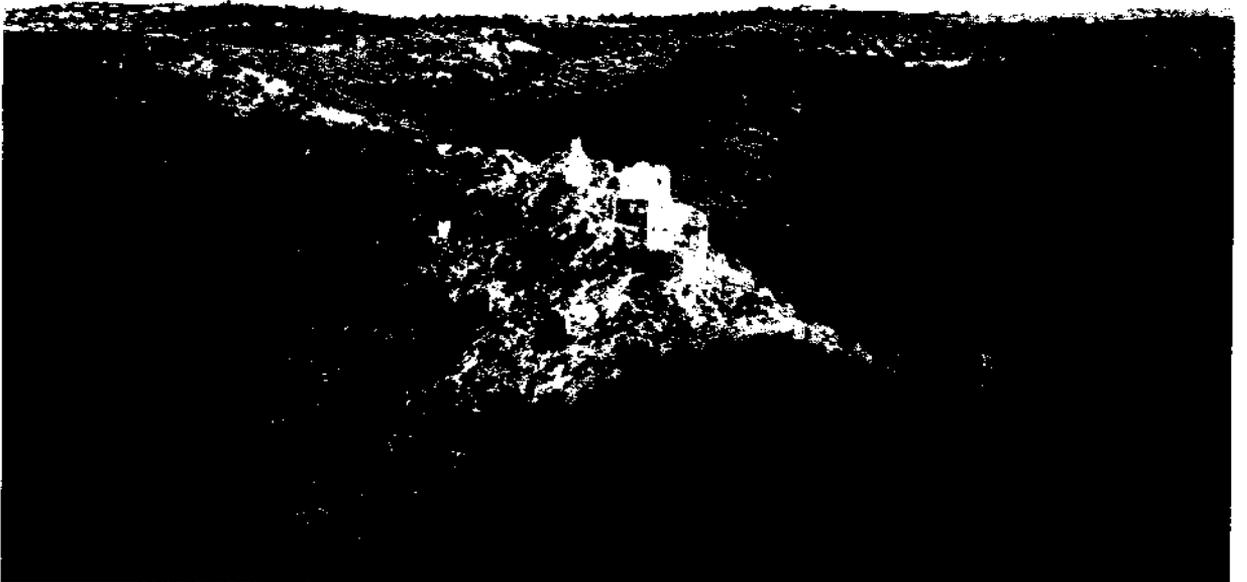
D-South

b

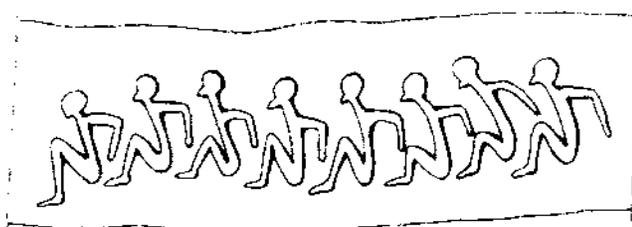




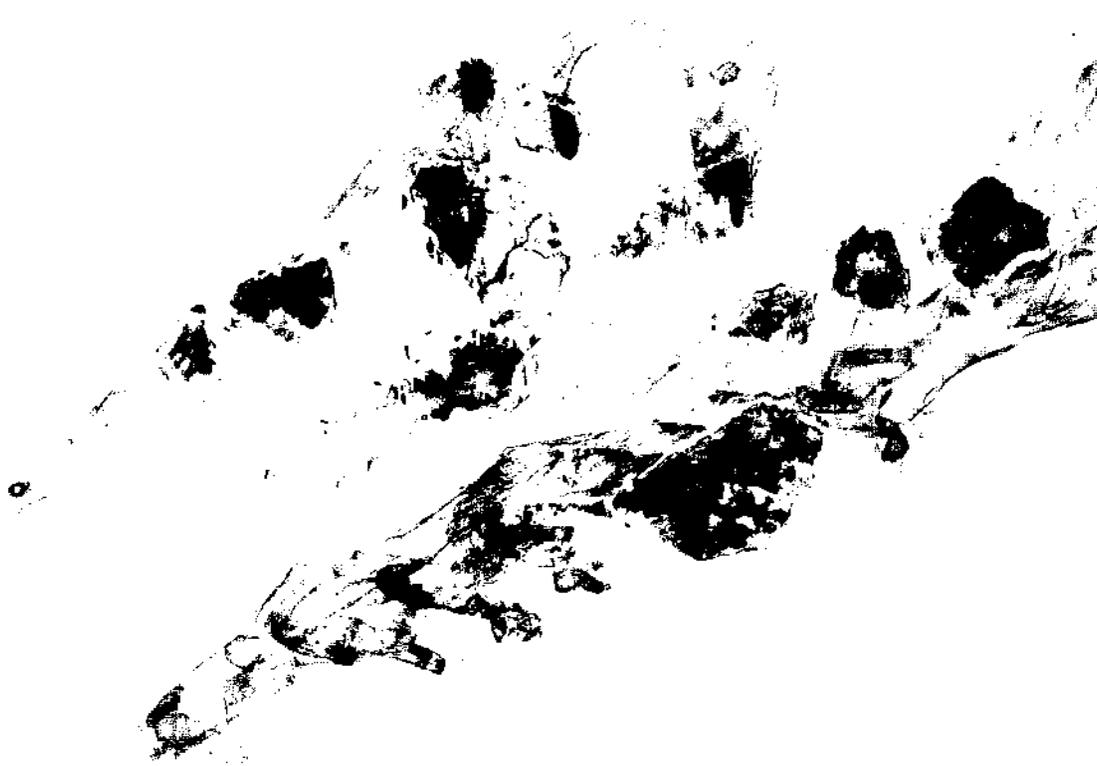
a



b



a



b

b



a

