

A PRIDE OF LEOPARDS: A UNIQUE ASPECT OF THE HUNT FRIEZE FROM TELL EL-DAB^cA¹

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INTRODUCTION

Tell el-Dab^ca (Avaris) is situated along what was, in ancient times, the eastern bank of the most easterly branch of the Nile Delta. The settlement would have been surrounded by channels and basins, with natural inlets perfect for harbours.² To this strategic location – en route to the East and next to a river course leading to the Mediterranean – Aegean artists were apparently brought to paint the walls of Egyptian palaces. Excavation of the area which yielded these paintings – near the modern village of Ezbet Helmi – has continued since their discovery in 1990, directed by Manfred BIETAK of the University of Vienna, under the auspices of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Publication of the remarkable Bulls Frieze, by Manfred Bietak, Nanno Marinatos and Clairly Palyvou, appeared in 2007.³ From the same deposit, and surely from the same iconographic programme, came numerous fragments of a Hunt Frieze, with felines, human hunters, dogs and prey, all within rocky and riverine landscapes.⁴ The articles in this volume on leopards and griffin (Morgan) and lions (Nanno Marinatos) constitute the preliminary publication of the feline hunters. As such,

reconstructions and conclusions, particularly in relation to the landscape and prey, are tentative and will be open to modification as the work progresses towards the final publication of the Hunt.

Both friezes were found thrown into a dump at the entrance ramp to Palace F (H/I), a small ceremonial building within a larger palatial compound, in the Ezbet Helmi area of the excavation (Fig. 1). Only the foundations have survived, with casemate substructures filled with brick and earth to form a platform on which the palace was built. A ramp led up to a courtyard with columns, which in turn led to the palatial rooms.⁵ A large lake lay between Palace F and the larger Palace G to the south (where remains of paintings were also recovered). Stratigraphic analysis places the construction of the buildings within the early Tuthmoside period, making the earliest possible date for the paintings Tuthmosis I, the latest Hatshepsut – early Tuthmosis III.⁶ It is the time of Hatshepsut / early Tuthmosis III that Bietak favours (c.1470 BCE), as this is the time of closest cultural contacts between the Aegean and Egypt,⁷ when *Keftiu* (assumed to be Minoan) traders are first depicted in the Tombs of the Nobles in Egyptian Thebes,⁸ textual references to the *Keftiu* increase,⁹

¹ Sincere thanks to Manfred Bietak for his support and consultation at all stages of the work on the paintings, and to him and Nanno Marinatos for their helpful comments on the many drafts of this work. The manuscript for the felines was first completed in 2004 by myself and Nanno Marinatos as a fascicule, updated in 2008, then re-organized as articles for this volume in 2009.

² MARCUS 2006; TRONCHÈRE *et al.* 2008.

³ BIETAK, MARINATOS & PALYVOU 2007, with full previous bibliography on the excavation and the wall paintings.

⁴ On the Hunt: BIETAK & MARINATOS 1995; MARINATOS 1996, 1998, 2000, 2005; MORGAN 1995a, 1998a, 2004, 2006, 2007.

⁵ Reconstruction of the palace: BIETAK 2005a, fig. 3.5; 2005b, fig. 31; BIETAK 2007, fig. 24 (exterior).

⁶ BIETAK 2000b; 2005a; BIETAK, DORNER & JÁNOSI 2001; MORGAN 2004.

⁷ WARREN 1995, 13; CLINE 1994, 31–34, 14 (fig. 2, table 3), 43 (table 25).

⁸ The earliest recognizable examples of *Keftiu* appear in the time of Hatshepsut, the majority occur in the reign

of Tuthmosis III, and by the time of Amenhotep II the few examples no longer display close familiarity with the people. *Keftiu* in Theban tombs were discussed extensively by VERCOUTTER (1956) and Wachsmann (1987). Recent studies, with full bibliographies, include HELCK 1995; Mathäus 1995; REHAK 1996, 1998; PANAGIOTOPOULOS 2001, 2006; PINCH-BROCK 2000. PANAGIOTOPOULOS argues for the historicity of these scenes, pointing out that they occur not in temples but in private tombs, and should be seen not as propaganda but as a reflection of events which took place during the tomb owners' lives.

⁹ VERCOUTTER 1956, 51–68. At the beginning of the New Kingdom there are references to *Keftiu* places – an indication of direct contact rather than merely secondary trade (VERCOUTTER 1956, 45–51, Doc. 4; SAKELLARAKIS and SAKELLARAKIS 1984, 198, 201; WACHSMANN 1987, 93–95; LAMBROU-PHILLIPSON 1990, 117–118; HELCK 1979, 28; 1995, 21; KYRIAKIDIS 2002.) During the reign of Tuthmosis III we also hear of the people from the *Isles in the midst of the Great Green* (the Cyclades and the Peloponnese?) and, for the first time, the *Tanaya* (Mycenae)

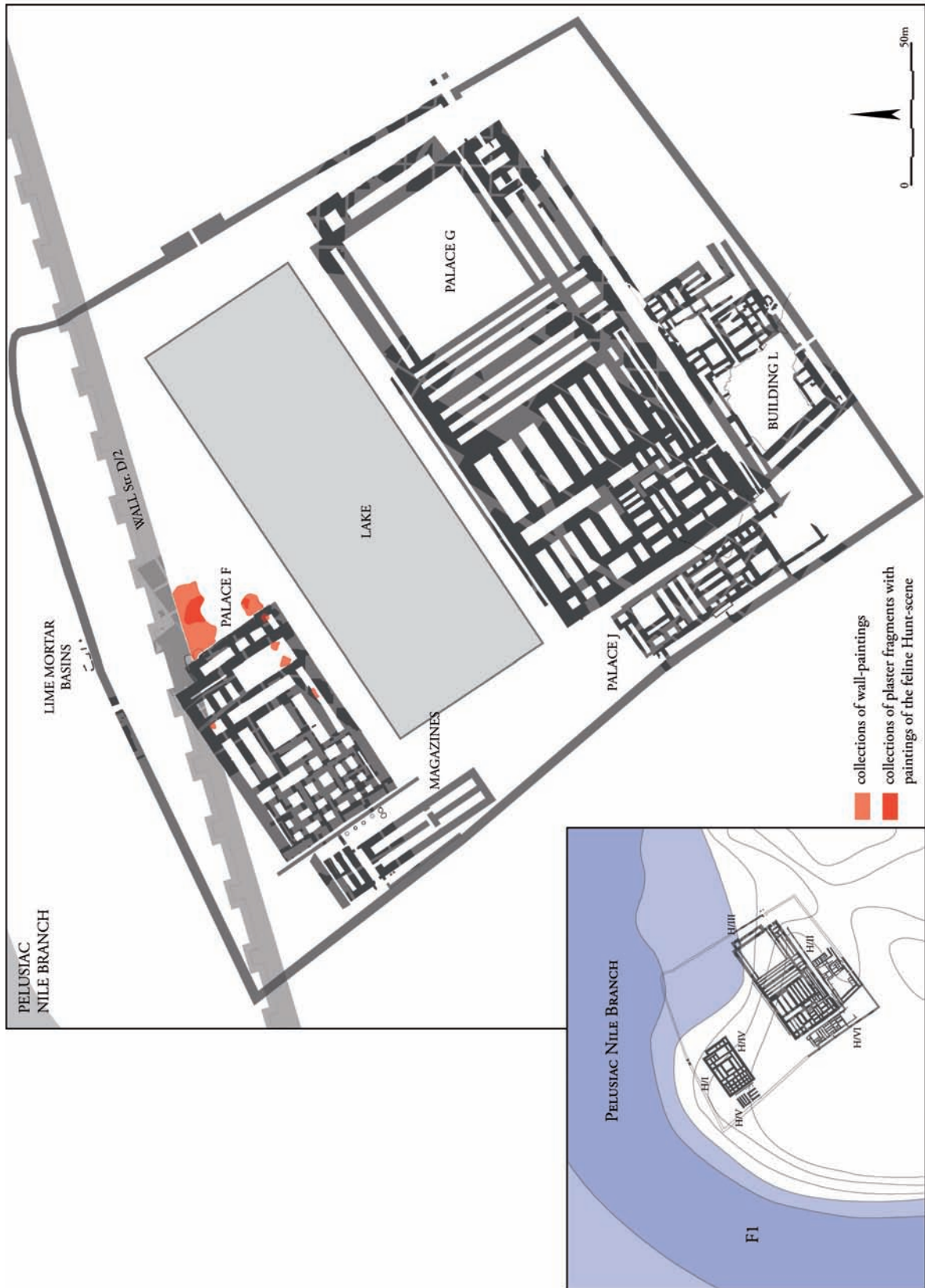


Fig. 1 Plan of the foundations of the early 18th dynasty palaces and related buildings. Light Red: dumps of wall paintings from Palace F (Platform H/I). Dark Red: find spots of fragments of wall paintings with lions, leopards and griffin. Inset: The relationship of the palatial compound to the Nile. (After J. Dorner; Graphics N. Math)

and *Keftiu* ships are mentioned.¹⁰ In Minoan terms, the Tell el-Dab^{ca} paintings, when dated to this period, would be Late Minoan IB.¹¹

The architecture of the palaces is Egyptian in both materials (mud-brick) and design. Yet the techniques and idiom of the painted plaster from Palace F are Aegean.¹² The plaster is fine, hard lime, not gypsum or mud as Egyptian painters used.¹³

This reflects a wider interest by royal patrons in Aegean wall painting, exemplified by the painted lime plasters with Aegean features found at the Levantine palaces of Alalakh, Tel Kabri and Qatna.¹⁴ In the Levant, however, there is little comparative material to enable one to clearly define the contrast with what might have been specifically Levantine painting, complicating the issue of identity of craftsmanship. Nonetheless, it is clear that, within a certain time-span, access to the coast is the marker of the degree to which Aegean aspects are in evidence.¹⁵ Several authors

have stressed the tenuous nature of artistic identification for these paintings, astutely preferring to focus instead on the social role of reception.¹⁶ That these paintings would have appeared different, even “exotic”, within the context of Levantine material culture has been demonstrated.¹⁷ This was art for the elite, who functioned within a social structure that was mobile and hence open to the sharing of visual stimuli and ideas.

Tell el-Dab^{ca} is a special case, since Egypt had a long and rich tradition of wall painting which is still in evidence (albeit from tombs), so the contrast between the paintings and those of the local culture is closely definable. While colour conventions for Egypt and the Aegean are similar, we see at Tell el-Dab^{ca} the specifically Minoan use of blue for foliage instead of green. The painted field is free ranging in the manner of Aegean painting, not in registers as in Egyptian. The idiom, movements and relative scale in the depiction of humans and animals and the

(VERCOUTTER 1954, 127–141; 1956, 129–134; MERRILLEES 1998, 150; CLINE 1994, 32). While there are sporadic references to the Isles in the Midst of the Great Green before, that the islands should be mentioned primarily during the LM IB / Tuthmosis III period is curious, if these are the Cyclades, as this is after the Theran eruption and there are no Egyptian imports into the Cycladic islands at this time (CLINE 1994, table 25 on p. 43).

¹⁰ In BM papyrus 10056, *Keftiu* ships are being built or repaired at *Pruw-nfr*, the royal naval dockyard and main Egyptian port during the time of Tuthmosis III (SÄVE-SÖDERBERG 1946, 37). Usually located at Memphis, the possibility of an eastern Delta location for *Pruw-nfr* was mooted by Daressy (cited and argued against by SÄVE-SÖDERBERG, 38–39, 47–50). This suggestion was revived by Labib Habachi (cited by BIETAK 1996, 82) and has now been fully argued by BIETAK (2005c, 2009, and in ARUZ, BENZEL and EVANS 2008, 112).

¹¹ Synchronisation of Aegean and Egyptian chronology: BIETAK (ed.) 2000, M. BIETAK, 83–95 (‘Egypt’) and P. WARREN 154–161 (‘Crete’); KITCHEN 2000, 2002; WARREN 2007.

¹² Technical analyses of pigments and plaster are provided by SEEGER 2000; BRYLSBAERT 2002, 2007a; WINKELS 2007. See also BRYLSBAERT 2007b, 2008.

¹³ It appears that painting on lime plaster superseded the local method of painting on mud. Fragments of wall paintings applied directly on to a mud wall have been recovered from a Hyksos level (BIETAK, MARINATOS & PALYVOU 2007, 16–17). Wall paintings on mud plaster were also recovered from beneath the landing of Palace G, of Egyptian technique, but with Aegean influence in the motifs (BIETAK and FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2003, 44–45, figs. 7–11; SEEGER 2004).

¹⁴ Discussed in BIETAK 2007; FELDMAN 2007, 2008; ARUZ, BENZEL and EVANS 2008, 123–130; BRYLSBAERT 2008, 97–110. The paintings from Alalakh (16th c) display some Aegean features. Those from Tel Kabri are very fragmentary but appear to be Aegean in execution (NIEMEIER 1991, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c; NIEMEIER and NIEMEIER 1998, 2000; CLINE and YASUR-LANDAU 2007). The Qatna paintings are mainly of Aegean technique and have both Aegean and non-Aegean elements in the iconography (PFÄLZNER and VON RÜDEN 2008; VON RÜDEN 2009, forthcoming). Debate surrounds the dating of both the Kabri and Qatna paintings (Kabri: NIEMEIER 17th/16th c.; BIETAK late 16th c.; Qatna: PFÄLZNER c.1500; VON RÜDEN c.1400; BIETAK 14th century).

¹⁵ The time span is maximum 17th–14th / minimum 16th–15th centuries (cf. note 14). The paintings from Mari (18th century) are local Syrian work on mud plaster (with a few motifs shared culturally with Crete). Paintings from Tell Sakka in Syria (18th–17th BC) are Egyptianizing or Egyptian in character on mud plaster (TARAQJI 1999; BIETAK 2007), as, apparently, are those recently excavated at Tell Burak in Lebanon, which may be contemporary (FELDMAN 2007, note 1). Mari is considerably more inland than the other sites; Tell Sakka is somewhat inland but not on a major river; Alalakh and Qatna are both somewhat inland but on the Orontes river; Kabri is on a river very near the coast.

¹⁶ SHERRATT 1994, 237–238; KNAPP 1998, 198–202; FELDMAN 2008, 282–284).

¹⁷ FELDMAN 2007; 2008.



Fig. 2 Leopard 1 (Scale: 1:2) Leopard pouncing towards the left amongst blue trefoil plants (F. 9, 78, 265, 315).* (MORGAN 2006, fig. 1)

* In an early reconstruction (MARINATOS 1998, fig. 11) a large fragment, then interpreted as a belly, was associated with F.9. This fragment is now joined to another as F.70 (Leopard 2), where (the other way up) it shows the hind legs of the animal.

disposition of elements in the overall composition is Aegean.¹⁸

Thousands of small fragments were recovered, but poorly preserved with faded colours, making them difficult to read.¹⁹ Only around 10% of the Frieze has survived, making reconstruction difficult and tentative, particularly since the mural context has been lost.

The felines are strikingly numerous - some ten lions, six leopards and a half-feline, the griffin – a unique ensemble in ancient art which justified the decision to present them in a preliminary publication. It should, however, be held in mind that the full publication will situate these animals within the larger context of the Hunt.

Reconstructions of the leopards were first drawn by the author, then executed as computer realizations by Marian Negrette Martinez, using the methods developed for the Bulls Frieze by Clairy Palyvou.²⁰ Reconstruction of the poses is based first on the range of fragments that have survived from the painting and then on comparative iconography – from seals, wall paintings, inlaid metal and other media, which form the models for the positions of bodies and limbs of the animals, using the fragments that have survived. It is surprising how much information regarding overall posture can be discerned from, for example, the angle of a fragment of a leg. Often, the whole is reflected in the part.

There are numerous fragments of other prey – mainly deer and goats – which make it clear that this was a hunt on a large scale. The fact that one of the lions is actually attacking its prey – a bull - provides us with a focal point (MARINATOS this volume). The felines may have been hunting their prey co-operatively, but neither the associated landscape features nor the comparative iconography support this hypothesis. More likely, the lions, and perhaps the griffin, were together, while the leopards, on their red background, were pursuing different prey. There is no evidence that the human hunters and dogs interacted with the felines. In the final publication the composition as a whole will be presented as far as plausibility permits. While this is not the place to discuss the paintings as a whole, it should be held in mind that this was a unified programme, in which bull-leaping and the different aspects of hunting are manifestations of male prowess.

THE LEOPARDS

One of the most startling aspects of the Tell el-Dab^a wall paintings, is the discovery that no fewer than six leopards are depicted in the Hunt Frieze. This is unprecedented in the history of ancient art, remarkable both in terms of iconography and ethology. Leopards are solitary hunters; unlike lions, they do not, in life, hunt in a pride.

At least five moved to the left and one to the right. All are set against a red background. There

Fig. 2 Leopard 1

The large fragment, F.9, showing the rear half of a leopard with outstretched hind legs against a landscape of blue plants, has been combined with a fragment of a front paw (F.315). Two other fragments showing the same plant have been incorporated into the reconstruction. The plants, when placed upright, provide the angle of the leopard, who is clearly pouncing, hind legs higher than the forelegs. The animal is moving towards the left. The position of the body in a pounce indicates familiarity with the movements of the live animal. Equally, the markings on the body, legs and tail are surprisingly accurate. Although they are poorly preserved (the black having smudged on tail and leg) a distinction is clear between the rosette spots on the body and solid black spots on the leg. Towards the lower end of the tail, the black markings give the impression of being almost stripes, which, again, would be anatomically accurate (although the end of the tail appears to be without markings). The distant hind leg is shown in white, indicating the light underside of the animal. A black line divides the far leg from the near leg, the upper portion of which is also white. It appears that the black dividing line (which does not exist on Leopard 2) was added as an afterthought to improve the proportion of the thigh. Traces of a black line can also be discerned along the top of the far leg. The usual white underbelly is not depicted in the preserved fragment. Presumably it ended further forward than in Leopard 2 (F.70). The claws are delineated in blue and are visibly extended, as though about to attack.

¹⁸ Nanno Marinatos (this volume) uses the word 'Minoan' to include all island and mainland cultures under the sway of Minoan Crete. I use the word 'Aegean' in a geographic sense (like 'Egyptian, Near Eastern, or 'Greek'), to include all areas – Crete, the Cyclades, the Mainland – without judgment on political

affiliation. That the Aegean was heavily dominated by the culture of Minoan Crete at this time cannot, however, be doubted.

¹⁹ The fragments have been expertly cleaned and conserved by Rudolph Sieber and Aris Gerontas.

²⁰ BIETAK, MARINATOS & PALYVOU 2000, fig. 10.



Fig. 3 Leopard 2 (Scale: 1:2)

Leopard pouncing towards the left, at the top of the composition. (Leopard: F.70*; Red background: F.755, 826, 827).

The large fragment F. 70 has a flat upper edge where the plaster abutted a wooden beam. This vital diagnostic feature informs us that the leopard is at the top edge of the composition. The fragment is poorly preserved but is distinguishable as the body, hind legs and (barely visible) tail of the animal. Like Leopard 1, the animal is pouncing downwards, the hind legs lifted up higher than the fore legs. The body and legs are, however, at a different angle to one another in the two animals. The body is also chunkier in Leopard 2, and the tail is set higher. While the artists clearly had a model or 'idea' of a pouncing leopard, these differences mitigate against the use of a traced model. It is possible that this was painted by a different artist to that of Leopard 1. There is no evidence for any landscape associations with this leopard. However, the position - at the top of the frieze - is significant. Other edge fragments in the red background have been added. There are many such fragments from this deposit of wall paintings and we must assume that the upper edge of the frieze was red.

* Earlier reconstruction (prowling rather than pouncing): MARINATOS 1998, fig. 9.



Fig. 4 Leopard 3 (Scale: 1:2)
 Leopard prowling towards the left (F. 88, 317, 797) (MORGAN 2004, fig. 4)
 The hind leg and belly of a leopard (F.88) indicates a prowling pose on a hilly ground. The unusual relationship between body and leg shows that the animal walks down the hill, a movement which can be compared to that of the right-hand leopard on the Rutsi dagger (Fig. 20) and the lion above the Departure Town in the Theran Miniature Ship Frieze (MARINATOS, this volume, fig. 35). The forelegs have been reconstructed accordingly and two fragments of body with rosette spots have been added to the composition. One (F.317) has a black line and red hairs. Its exact anatomical position is uncertain, but it appears to fit as the back and upper part of the hind thigh.



Fig. 5 Leopard 4 (Scale: 1:2)

Leopard pouncing towards the right (F 77, 114, 124, 321, 323).

The only surviving head of a leopard has been reconstructed with forelegs, belly and body pieces. The animal moves towards the right - the only leopard in the composition to do so. The head (F 77) has a whitish-blue eye with black pupil. Red lines delineate the eye, face and ear. Black flecks suggest the leopard's spots. The snout is not preserved, but appears from the edge of the fragment to have been white. The body fragment F.323 has well preserved rosette leopard spots. F 114, however, has accretions on the surface, which make reconstruction of the spots on the forelegs untenable. The far leg (F 321) and under-belly (F 124) are both defined in white and fine red lines separate under-belly from body. Reconstruction of the spots on the hind legs is based on Leopard 2 (F 70). The forelegs are drawn apart, as though the animal were springing on to its prey, the far leg poised ready to strike. A small patch of blue above the animal's head indicates a plant. As it is above, rather than below, this must have been situated in the middle or lower part of the frieze rather than the top.



Fig. 6 Leopard 5 (Scale: 1:2)

Leopard stalking towards the left (Leopard: F 113, 600, 601; Rock: F 688).

A single foreleg (F 113), with red ground either side, belongs to a walking animal rather than one in flying gallop. Two fragments of body have been added to the composition. Judging by the angle, the gait must be exceptionally wide, and this leg cannot belong to any of the other compositions. The lower part of the fragment has a flattened sloping edge, indicating that it abutted a beam. Given the angle of the leg, this should be the bottom edge of the composition. A small patch of blue at the lower edge was painted directly on to the plaster (rather than over the red ground). This is the way in which rock was painted in parts of the frieze and we can assume that a blue rock continued below the leg of the animal, where the surface has worn completely away. A large fragment of multi-coloured rock has been added to the lower right. This, too, has a flattened edge, indicating that it belongs to the lower edge of the composition. The closest parallel for the animal is the leopard stalking a bird on the right hand side of the Rutsi dagger (Fig. 20).

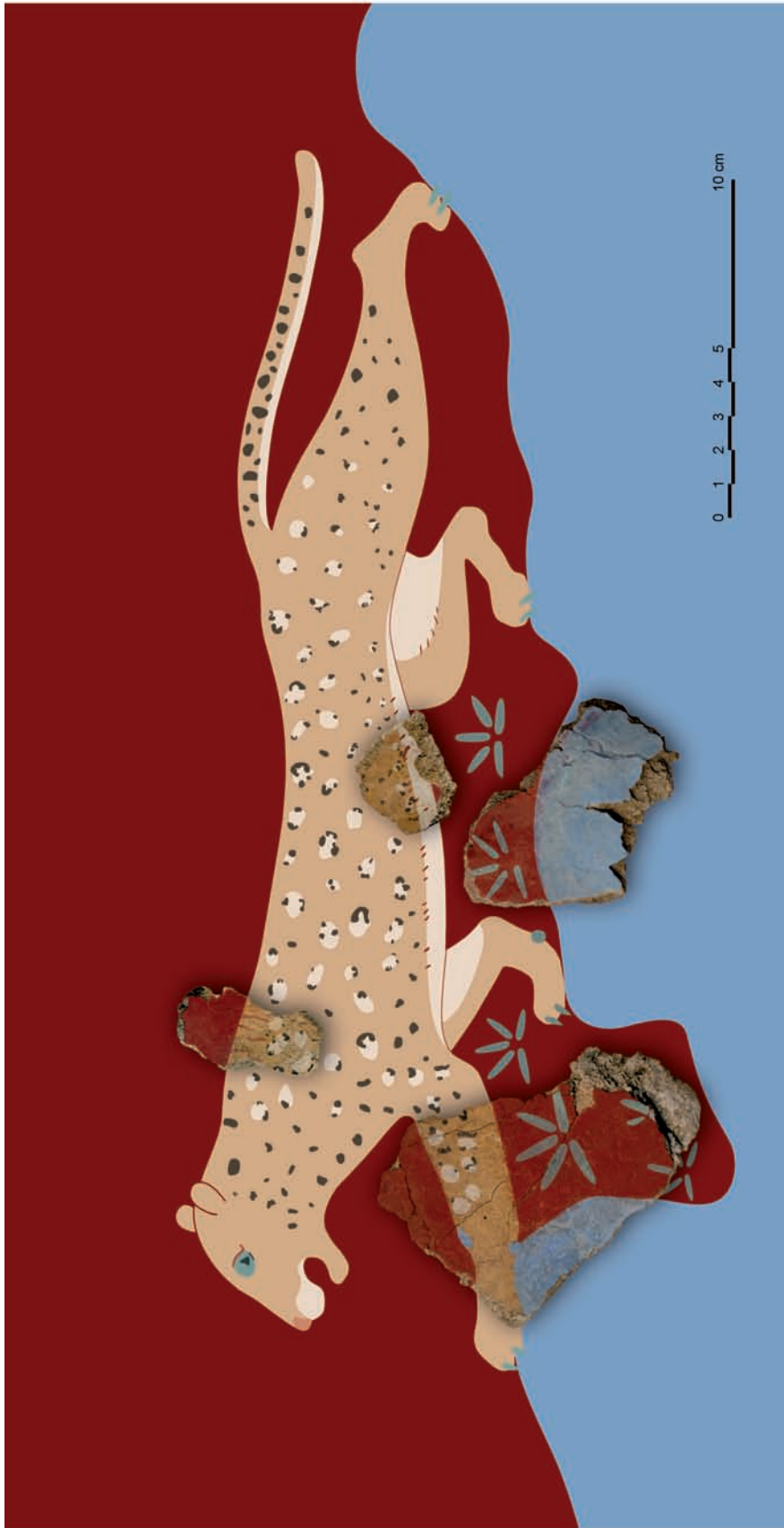


Fig. 7 Leopard 6 (Scale: 1:2)
 Leopard stalking towards the left amongst plants (Leopard: F 69, * 118, 319; Landscape: F 808).
 The animal is reconstructed from three pieces: a foreleg (F:69) and fragments of underbelly (F 118) and back (F 319). The animal's characteristic rosette spots, painted white with black surrounds, appear on the foreleg and are just visible on the belly and back. The curve of the back suggests the upper part, approaching the neck. A wide white stripe represents the underbelly. The foreleg indicates that the animal is stepping on to a rock (painted blue), next to which are small, spiky plants apparently without stems. Judging by the foreleg, the animal appears to be stalking or prowling, rather than pouncing. Another fragment (F 76) shows the same stemless plant beneath the body of a spotted animal, which should be a deer (see below). Its association with the leopard, through the only indication of a direct relationship between predator and prey.

* The foreleg, F 69, was previously published facing in the other direction (MARINATOS 1998, fig. 11, left). However, the plants and rock should be beneath the animal, as in the new reconstruction, rather than above.

are over thirty fragments, the best-preserved of which display the diagnostic feature of rosette spots. Seven fragments provide evidence of their relationships within the composition: plants and rockwork as well as both the top and bottom edges of the frieze.

No prey is seen with a leopard on the same fragment, but associated landscape indicates that the leopards were hunting deer. There are numerous fragments of fallow deer, which will be presented in the final publication. There is no indication that the leopards were hunting alongside the lions, though comparative iconography allows that that may have been the case. It is notable that the lions are set against both red and yellow background, the leopards only against red.

COMPOSITION OF THE LEOPARDS

There are no surviving fragments which show lion and leopard or leopard and prey together. We know from Lion 8 (MARINATOS this volume, fig. 22) that lions attack a bull. We know that deer, goats and perhaps antelope, were also prey. The only clue as to whether any of the leopards actually *attack* one of the prey comes (a) from the directions and positions of their movements, and (b) from the associated landscape. One leopard moves to the right, all the others to the left. The one which moves to the right (Leopard 4) has forelegs apart in what must be a pounce *onto* or *towards* something. The paws have not survived so we cannot see onto or towards what. Two other leopards (1 and 2) pounce, while the others stalk.

The leopards are painted on a red ground and hunt amongst blue rocks and plants.²¹ Well preserved flattened edges, where the painting abutted a horizontal wooden beam at top and bottom (F.70 and F.113), show that they occupied the entire height of the frieze. Leopard 2 pounces down from the upper part of the composition; Leopard 5 steps onto blue rock at the base of the composition. The top was red (Leopard 2), the middle zone had a landscape of plants against the red ground (Leopards 1 and 6), and

the base was rocky, predominantly blue. Other fragments of rock are blue banded with red and yellow. The landscape of the Hunt Frieze is extremely varied. It seems that the leopards hunt in a somewhat different environment from the lions and the griffin.

The blue rock was painted directly over the plaster, not over the red ground. Apparently the artists blocked out background and rock areas first, before adding the animals and landscape details.

Two plants are associated with the leopards. One – with Leopard 1 – has a thick blue stem with large broad leaves growing in groups of twos and threes (Figs. 2, 8). It is a large plant and was apparently painted on to the red ground before the leopard, which overlies it both physically and perceptually as we have the impression that the leopard is rushing past the plant.

The second plant – with Leopard 6 – grows directly from the ground, stemless, with clusters of five spiky leaves. It is a low growing rock plant, appearing between the leopard's foreleg and a blue rock (F 69, Figs. 7, 10). Another fragment with an animal has the same plant (F 76). Also on a red ground, these plants lie directly beneath the body of a large yellow ochre animal with white spots, which are smaller and more irregular in shape than those of the leopards, and lack the characteristic thick black outlining of the leopard's 'rosette' markings. It should be a deer. There is no white underbelly, which means it is the animal's back and, since Leopard 6 clearly gives us the orientation of the plants, the deer must be fallen prey, on its back. This is the closest evidence for an actual prey associated with the leopards. It will appear, along with the other prey animals, in the final publication of the Hunt Frieze.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEOPARDS

The best preserved fragments, of Leopards 1 and 2 (F 9 and F 70, Figs. 8, 9), indicate that the proportions of the animals vary, the former being more slender than the latter. Only one tail is well preserved (Leopard 1, F 9) (the other, Leopard 2,

²¹ A red ground with rocky landscape is known from the Saffron-Gatherer fresco from Knossos (MM III) (MORGAN (ed.) 2005, pl. 4:1) and the Birds and Monkeys frieze from the House of the Frescoes in Knossos town (LM IA) (CAMERON 1967, 1968; EVELY 1999, 247

(Cameron), 264 (Gilliéron)); MORGAN (ed.) 2005, pl. 5). In the latter, the red is combined with areas of white, like the undulating colour changes of red and yellow ground associated with the Tell el-Dabʿa lions (MARINATOS this volume).



Fig. 8 Hind legs of

F.70, being barely visible). In its outstretched position, it appears to be slightly shorter than the legs, but the tip of the tail has not survived. In reality, a leopard's tail is considerably longer than its legs and, in relation to its body, proportionately longer than the tail of a lion.

Two of the leopards (1 and 2) have their hind legs in the outstretched 'flying gallop' character-

istic of Minoan depictions of animals in movement and appropriate for the feline gallop. From the orientation dictated by the plants (F9, Fig. 8) and the upper edge of the frieze (F 70, Fig. 9) however, it is clear that both animals have their hind legs kicked up, body angled downwards toward the ground. This indicates a pounce rather than a gallop, landing at the destination



Leopard 1, F 9 (scale: 1:1)

rather than running towards it. The downward pointing hind paws on the better preserved leopard (1) reinforce this observation. Leopard 4, moving to right, has forelegs parallel, one higher than the other (F 114, Fig. 10). This suggests a pounce. In the true flying gallop both forelegs would be together; while in a walk, one leg is forward, the other back. The walking legs of the

other three leopards (3 (F.88), 5 (F.113) 6 (F.69)) indicate the gait of a prowl (Fig. 10).

Such movements are, in fact, characteristic of leopards, whose predatory behaviour differs from that of the lion. While lions rush after their fleeing prey, leopards stalk them, prowling quietly behind with head low until they are around ten metres away when they pounce, before the prey

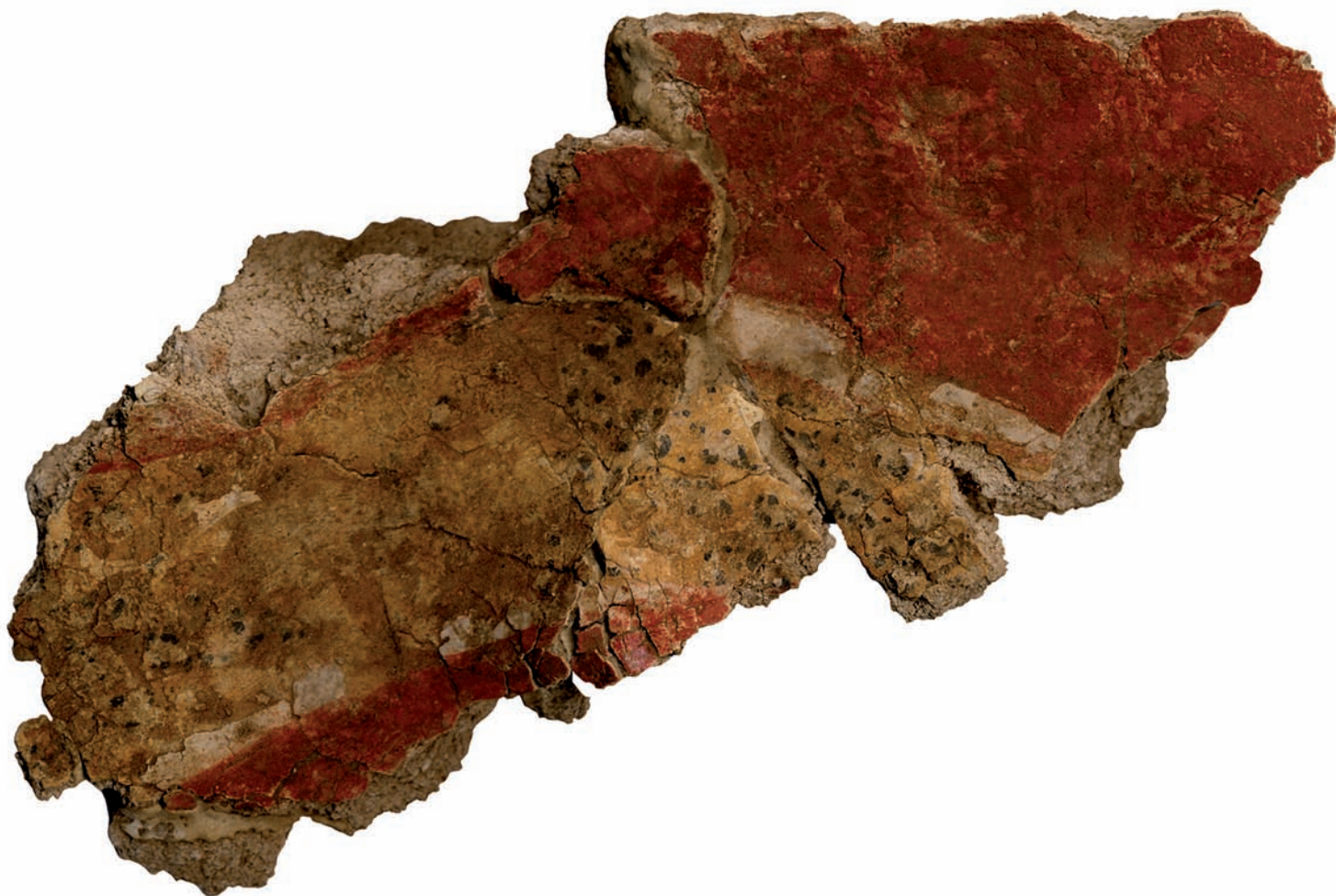


Fig. 9 Body and hind legs of

has time to register and escape.²² In part, these different methods of hunting reflect the fact that lions hunt in collaboration whilst leopards are solitary in their habits.

One head is preserved, facing to the right (F 77, Fig. 11). The eye is pale blue, outlined above in red and below in black. The pupil is black. Red defines the ear and, in short strokes, expressively adds definition to the fur. There is white around the snout.

Like the lions, the leopard bodies are painted yellow ochre. The legs are outlined in black on one animal (1: F 9, Fig. 8) as is the paw on two fragments (F.88, F.113, Fig. 10). On the body and foreleg, there are distinctive white spots irregularly outlined in black, depicting the characteristic 'rosettes' of the leopard. On two animals (2: F.70, Fig. 9; and 3: F.88, Fig. 10) these continue down the hind leg but on Leopard 1 (F 9, Fig. 8)

they become purely black, as they do on the tail. This corresponds more accurately to the leopard's natural markings. Leopards have rosettes on torso and flanks, not on legs (Fig. 12). F 88 and F 113 are, therefore, anatomically inaccurate, while F 9 is more accurately observed. On the tail of the animal, the rosettes become black spots, which gradually merge to become stripes near the tip. This pattern may be loosely followed on F.9. Use of white paint gives emphasis to the spots, which in reality are the same yellow colour as the rest of the fur, merely defined by black (Figs. 12, 13).

The underbelly is white, more distinctly than in life. On two animals (2 and 3: F 70, F 88, Figs. 9, 10) the white continues along the under part of the back thigh; but on Leopard 1 (F 9, Fig. 9), there is no evidence of white even as the fragment approaches the belly. The artists were apparently not consistent in their application of details.

²² ESTES 1992, 367.



Leopard 2, F 70 (scale: 1:1)

White is also used for the far leg, both at the back (F 9, F 70, Figs. 8, 9) and at the front (F 114, Fig. 10), partly as a means of distinguishing the two and partly to indicate the inner area of the leg. The underside of the tail is also picked out in white (F 9, F 70, Figs. 8, 9).

Fine red lines, deftly depicting fur, divide white underbelly from yellow body on some fragments. On F 70 (Fig. 9), such lines define the thigh of the near leg from that of the far. They appear also on F.319 (Leopard 6), probably marking the upper part of the neck where it meets the back, and on F.317 (Leopard 3), which may mark the joint between back and hind leg.

The appearance of rows of individual hairs is actually apparent on the underbelly of the leopard, as on the lion, and does indeed mark the line between the darker fur and the white underbelly. On the leopard, however, this white underbelly is less distinct, as it merges with the spots (Fig. 12). Probably the artist has modelled the white/yellow distinction on depictions of the lion.

On the forelegs are one or two blue dots. On F.69 (Fig. 10) it lies on both the upper part – i.e. inner side – of the foreleg and the under side (where it almost merges with the rock). The upper parts of the legs of F.113 and F.114 (Fig. 10) are less well preserved but probably also had the same feature. On the undersides it is clear. The inner one evidently represents the dew-claw, or thumb, which on cats is set back from the other four claws and projects slightly out at the side. The lower one corresponds to the wrist bone, which is seen as a pink pad (like those on the underside of the paw) set higher up behind the paw, on the back of the leg. The positioning of the blue dots is approximate but there is no doubt what they represent. The dew-claw and the wrist pad occur only on the forelegs, which the artists have accurately observed.

As on the lions (though in less detail), the hind paws in F9 and forepaw in F 315 (Figs. 8, 10) have two large claws, painted blue. This emphasis on the claws is of particular interest. Large cats

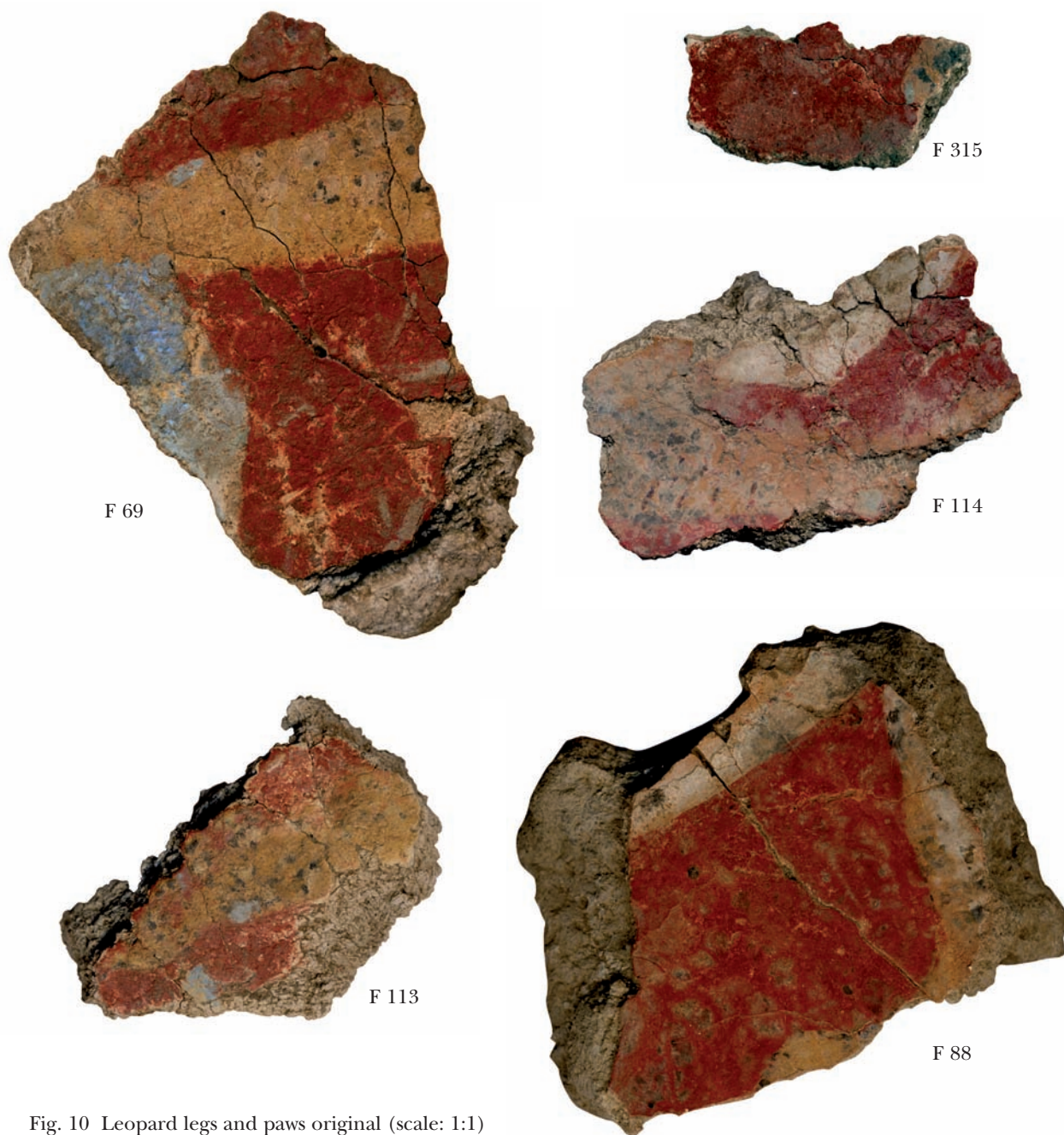


Fig. 10 Leopard legs and paws original (scale: 1:1)

keep their claws sheathed while chasing prey (it could be dangerous if they made a swipe at an animal and accidentally remained attached). It is only at the moment of the kill that the claws are unsheathed, sinking into the prey as the predator pulls the animal towards itself.²³ Such emphasis in the painting, therefore, serves to draw attention to the aggressive potential of the animal.

What is apparent from all these observations is that there was no one model for the image of the leopard. The details vary on the different animals. Either one artist was experimenting or there were several artists at work on the painting. Such differences also suggest that the iconographic model – in terms of colours and markings – was not fixed. Given how rare painted representations of leopards are from the Aegean in particular, but also from Egypt, this is not surprising. What is surprising is the fact that instead of one or two solitary leopards, several are shown. What is also surprising is the

²³ ESTES 1992, 349, 351.

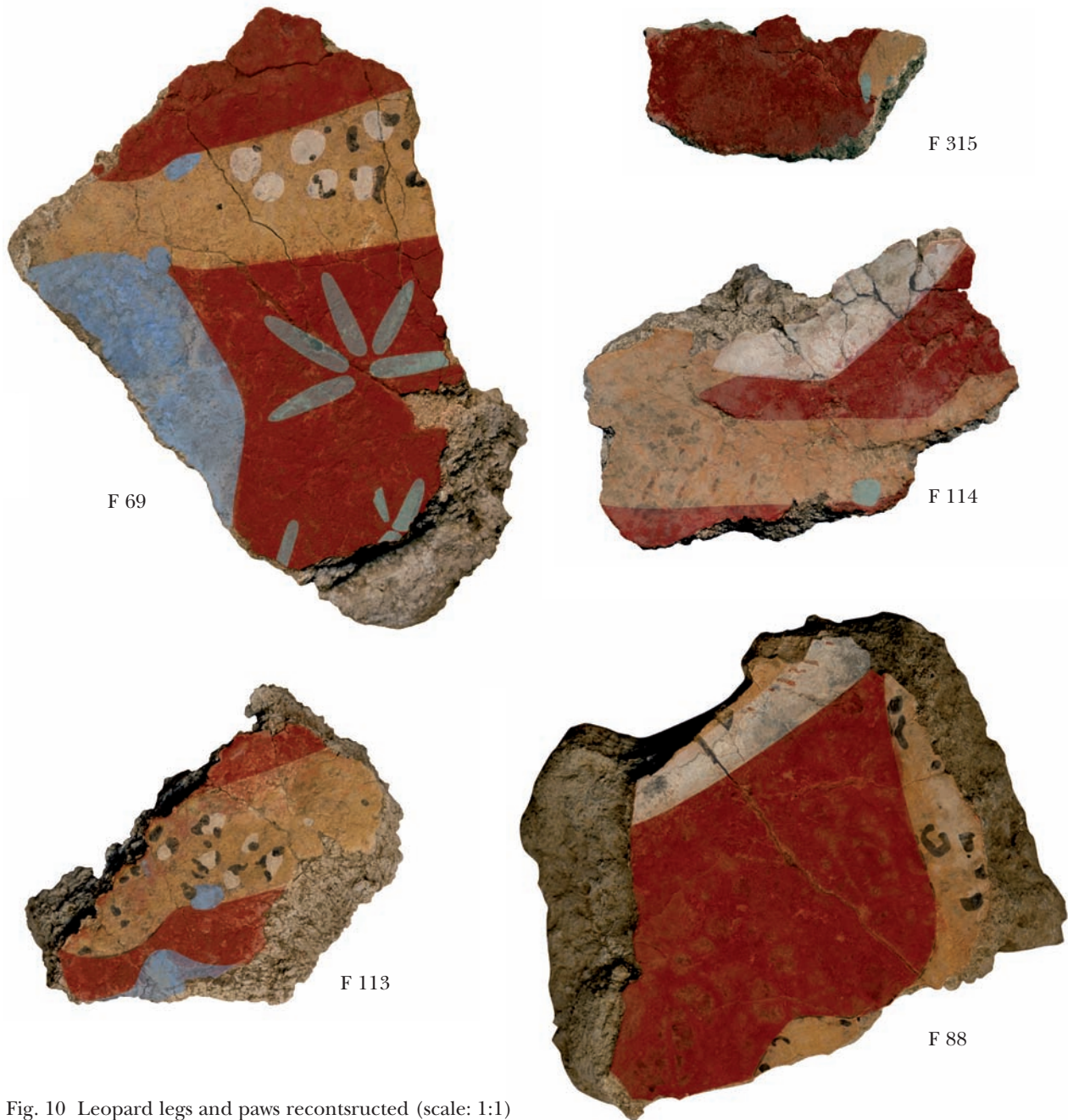


Fig. 10 Leopard legs and paws reconstructed (scale: 1:1)

degree of accuracy in the expression of movement and the observation of individual details, even if such observations are not consistently applied to each animal. We must ask whether these Aegean painters actually had opportunities to see leopards.

THE LIVE ANIMAL

Along the margins of the Nile and the vegetated land of the Delta, artists at Tell el-Dabʿa would have

had opportunities to see, if not large cats, at least their smaller cousins, which could have served as models for some details of the paintings. The swamp cat (*Felis chaus*), in particular, inhabits reed beds – such as we see in the lion scenes – and marshy areas, and is often active during the day, hence more visible.²⁴

The leopard, however, is one of the widest ranging animals in Africa, living in all habitats in which

²⁴ HALTENORTH & DILLER 1980, 230; OSBORN & OSBORNOVÁ 1998, 110.



Fig. 11 Head of Leopard 4, F 77 (scale: 1:1)

it is able to conceal itself, including, in ancient times, most of Egypt.²⁵ This diversification owes much to the leopard's wide variety of prey, which ranges from birds and reptiles to antelopes larger than itself, and even the young of some predators.

Yet leopards, like most large cats but unlike lions, are solitary and secretive in their habits, making them difficult to study in the wild, as much for the ancient artist as for the modern zoologist. They are largely nocturnal, hunting intermittently from dusk to dawn, though in habitats in which they are undisturbed by enemies – jackals, lions, hunting dogs – they can also be active by day. To ascertain whether the Aegean artists working at Tell el-Dabca might have actually seen leopards, we need to consider the details of their depiction.

From the physical characteristics of the animal, one can say only that the artists were familiar with its appearance, though whether from real life or from other iconographic sources remains unclear. Griffins were 'accurately' depicted in Egypt, the Near East and the Aegean, without (we assume) their ever having been seen in the flesh. The fact that some traits, however, are modelled on the lion indicates a certain lack of familiarity, as does the fact that individual depictions display differences.

Leopards and lions are of the same family.²⁶ Leopards are smaller than lions and, besides the obvious difference of bodily markings, have a less visible white underbelly and a proportionately longer tail.²⁷ In the painting a distinction has been made in overall size. There is insufficient evidence from the fragments to know if the differences in head shape – the leopard's head is shorter, broader and flatter – were made apparent.

It is unlikely that the artists had had close encounters with either lions or leopards. There are some basic errors: only two claws on each paw, and whitish-blue rather than yellowish-orange or brown eyes of the live animal. Yet these could be understood as iconographic 'short-hand' – ways of clarifying visual information. Two claws can be drawn larger on the paw than four, emphasizing the weapons of aggression. Yellow eyes would have been less distinctive against the yellow ochre coloration of the fur, while whitish-blue would sparkle more distinctly.

Most remarkable are the blue balls near the juncture of the forelegs and the paws, visible on both lions and leopards. Cats (large and small) have four toe pads and a palm pad (palmar at front, plantar at back) on which they walk. Four claws extend from each of the toe pads, front and back. On the forepaws, however, there is a fifth claw, the thumb or dew-claw, set considerably back and projecting slightly on the inner side of each paw. In addition, there is a wrist pad set yet further back in the middle, behind the palmar pad. So prominent is the latter that in profile it is permanently visible. Remarkably, the artists have defined these features with blue, those on the upper side of the near foreleg representing the inner dew-claw, and those on the outer side of the near foreleg, further back on the leg, being the wrist. Only the forelegs are defined in this way. It does not, however, require close encounters with leopards or lions to observe these features, they are visible on their smaller cousins, wild and domestic cats.

Coloration and markings are well observed in some cases, but not consistently. Both leopards and lions have whitish coloration on the under-

²⁵ On leopards see: ESTES 1992 366–9; HALTENORTH & DILLER 1980, 222–223; KLEINSGÜTL 1997, 65–71; OSBORN & OSBORNOVÁ 1998, 119–121.

²⁶ The species can even interbreed, producing fertile hybrids: ESTES 1992, 349.

²⁷ Average male shoulder height of leopards 60cm, head to body length 160 cm; versus 97 cm height, 172 cm length for lions. Average leopard tail 85 cm versus 84 cm for lions.



Fig. 12 East African Leopard (*Panthera pardus suahelicus*)
(Drawing by Helmut Diller, in: HALTENORTH & DILLER 1977, no. 2 on plate 40)

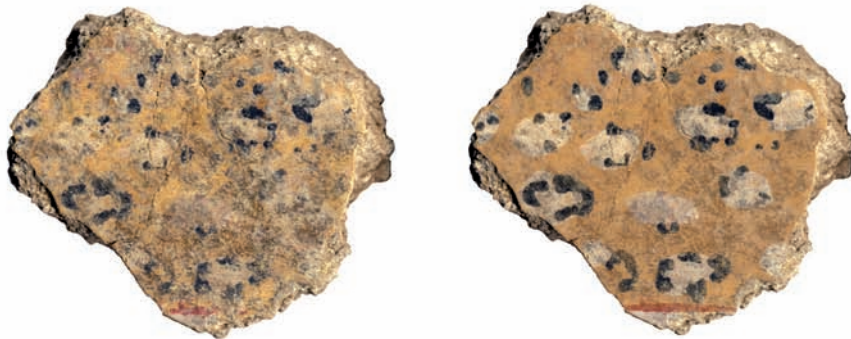


Fig. 13 Rosettes fragment, F 323 (Leopard 4) (scale: 1:1)

side of their jaws, throat, breast, belly and legs, all of which, where preserved, is portrayed. Characteristic of the East African Leopard (Fig. 12) is the distribution of solid versus rosette spots on legs and body respectively. This distinction is accurately portrayed on one leopard (1: F.9, Fig. 8), though less accurately on the others, while one fragment shows remarkably precise renditions of the rosettes (F.323, Fig. 13). The fusing of spots into rings around the end of the tail and the black tip are not observed on the only well preserved leopard tail (Fig. 8), though the black marks higher up on the tail give an impression of rings. There is insufficient evidence in the surviving fragments

to see whether the black and white ear (whose positions and movements are used for communication), or the distinctive black blotch on the lower throat of the leopard, were observed.

Most significant is the habits of the animals. Lions (notably lionesses) are the only cats with clan-territory systems and cooperative hunting tactics. Leopards hunt alone. Yet the painting appears to show a pride of leopards. (Similarly, the lion's mane is well observed, though not the fact that it is mainly lionesses that hunt within a pride.) On the other hand, lions chase their prey, galloping behind it as it tries to escape, whereas the leopard quietly stalks its prey, ambushing it before

pouncing at the last minute. This significant difference does appear to have been noted, the leopards in the painting adopting the characteristic postures of the prowl and the pounce. Furthermore, the prowling leopards in the painting all appear to descend rocks – a different habitat from that of the lions. When scouting for prey, leopards mount rocky outcrops (or termite mounds) in order to survey the land from a higher vantage point. There they sit and wait until they see their prey; then they descend, prowling down the rock towards them.²⁸ Again, the different hunting tactics of lions and leopards has been observed in the painting. (In contrast, the artist(s) of the Thera miniatures have not adhered to this distinction, the leopard-like feline on the east wall running in flying gallop (Fig. 15), and the solitary lion on the south wall prowling behind his prey (MARINATOS this volume, fig. 35).

From these observations, it is clear that the artist(s) at Tell el-Dab^ca had closely observed cats, even specifying certain minute details such as the blue dew-claw and wrist pad. The extraordinarily life-like rendition of the lion's mane and the particularization of the leopard's spots suggests familiarization with these specific large cats. Furthermore, the characteristic hunting method of the leopard – prowl and pounce – has been noted and contrasted against the lion's gallop. This observation of the leopard's hunting tactics is nowhere more expressively portrayed than at Tell el-Dab^ca. The leopard may not have been frequently or closely encountered but it had, I suggest, been seen. Perhaps this occurred in royal hunting grounds, in the land immediately to the east of Tell el Dab^ca at the edges of the Eastern Desert, on the trade route to the Near East, where lions and leopards would have preyed on ungulates amidst swamps, rocky hills, scrub vegetation and desert sand.

On the other hand, lions and leopards do not, in the wild, hunt together. In fact, lions regard leopards as competitors and may even kill them if they have the opportunity.²⁹ Although we cannot be sure whether lions and leopards were shown together in the painting, we know from the art of

the Shaft Graves that Aegean artists did on occasion think of the two felines as companion hunters (see below). Perhaps, in a frieze with numerous lions, the inclusion of several leopards – in reality solitary hunters – is less an error of feline behaviour than iconographic emphasis.

LEOPARDS IN AEGEAN, EGYPTIAN AND NEAR EASTERN ART

The Aegean

Leopards in Aegean art are relatively rare. The earliest may be dated to Middle Minoan III, corresponding to the Hyksos period in Egypt, 17th century BCE. A floor painting of MM IIIA from a house on the Royal Road at Knossos has a pattern of wavy black and white bands (giving it the nickname 'Zebra' fresco) enclosing areas of yellow with red spots partially outlined in black. These spots resemble those of a leopard.³⁰ The painting may reflect the use of skins as floor rugs. One of the earliest depictions of the leopard as an actual animal takes the form of a ceremonial stone axe from the palace of Mallia,³¹ dating to the latter part of Middle Minoan. That it is a leopard, rather than a lion, is suggested by spirals on the body and circles on the head and paw. Zig zag lines and a 'collar' also adorn the surface, however, and spirals were a popular form of decoration, especially for ceremonial weapons (cf. MORGAN, Griffin, this volume, fig. 21). On the Mallia axe, it is the low slung head which gives weight to the identification. It is significant that one of the earliest representations of a leopard in the Aegean should take the form of a ceremonial weapon. Contemporary or slightly later (MM IIIB–LM IA) is the spotted cat, perhaps a leopard, which stood as a headdress on one of the faience 'snake goddesses' from the Central Shrine at Knossos.³² Strikingly, this defines the animal as an attribute within the context of a Knossian cult. Similarly, fragments of a faience rhyton from the Treasury at the palace of Zakros (reconstructed with a long feline snout, on the basis of a calcite lioness-head rhyton from

²⁸ MATHEWS 1987. The film is located in Kenya, where leopards mount rocks in order to see over the long grass.

²⁹ MATHEWS 1987

³⁰ EVELY 1999, 248, no. 92: reconstruction by Mark Cameron. The areas with spots on yellow ground are

executed in *incavo* technique (the plaster cut out and refilled before painting).

³¹ MARINATOS & HIRMER 1976, Mallia leopard axe, pl. 68.

³² SAKELLARAKIS 1981, 37, No. 63; MARINATOS & HIRMER 1976, faience 'snake goddess' with spotted cat on headdress, pl. XXV; PHILLIPS 2008, no. 157.

Knossos), has black dashes on the head.³³ Identification of these as leopards, however, is uncertain.

More specifically leopard in appearance, is a head from a wall painting from Knossos (Fig. 14).³⁴ On the yellow ochre fur are large white oval spots distinctly outlined. The spots are less realistic than the 'rosettes' of the Tell el-Dab^a leopards, but recognizable nonetheless. The pupil of the eye is blue and fine red hairs delineate the white area surrounding the eye. Too fragmentary to know its iconographic context, it nonetheless provides evidence for the leopard, and hence presumably the hunt, in Knossian painting. A fragment of a game bird (partridge or pheasant) may have belonged to the scene.

Clearly chasing a bird is the large feline in the Hunt Landscape from Thera (Fig. 15). The blue colouration takes this animal into the realm of fantasy, making it a fit companion for the other predator in the painting – the griffin. The exact species of feline on which it is modelled is unclear. Judging by the pointed ears, small head and long upright neck, it most resembles a serval, though Negbi argues that that too is a leopard, while Kleinsgütl sees a combination of serval (appearance and habitat) and cheetah (hunting methods).³⁵ Iconographically, it makes sense as a leopard, though, as such, it would seem the artist lacked good models on which to draw.

Cat chasing bird is a familiar theme from Aegean painting of the mid second millennium.³⁶ It may have taken its inspiration from Egyptian fowling scenes, though the best examples of these are slightly later.³⁷ The Aegean instances are adapted for the local environment, without the larger context of humans and river craft. In a painting from Ayia Triada,³⁸ the landscape has become wholly Cretan, with rocks and

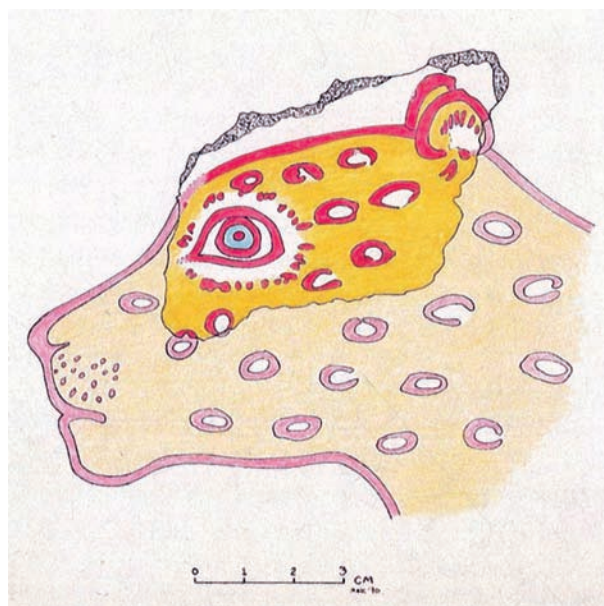


Fig. 14 Leopard head. Fragment of a painting from Knossos town, dump at North Threshing Floor Drawing: M. Cameron (EVELY 1999, 219, no. 51)

local flowers. On a dagger blade (Fig. 20) and a comb from Rutsi, near Pylos,³⁹ the landscape is generically rocky. On the other hand, on an inlaid dagger blade from Shaft Grave V at Mycenae (Fig. 17) and the miniature frieze from Thera (Fig. 15), a Nilotic or riverine landscape of reeds and papyrus is in evidence. On the small surfaces of dagger blades and comb the relative size of the feline is not always clear. Only on the Rutsi dagger are the animals unequivocally leopards. While the painting from Ayia Triada shows small wild cats, those from Thera, Knossos and Tell el-Dab^a show large felines, in the latter two, clearly leopards. In the Theran painting, the feline predator is complemented by a griffin, with its leonine body, chasing a deer. Deer were also a part of the composition in the Ayia Triada

³³ FOSTER 1979, fig. 9, pl. 6; PHILLIPS 2008, no. 107.

³⁴ EVANS, PM I, 540, fig. 392b, Gilliéron reconstruction; EVELY 1999, 219, Cameron reconstruction. CAMERON noted that the head might also have belonged to a rhyton. However, given the naturalistic colouring, an actual leopard is more likely. EVANS associated the feline head with the bird wing but CAMERON, who identified it as a leopard, considered they were painted by different artists (CAMERON & HOOD 1967, 23 (re. pl. D, fig. 6)). Comment: MORGAN 1988, 147.

³⁵ MORGAN 1988 41–42 (serval); NEGBI 1978, 65; KLEINSGÜTL 2000, 703/706. Kleinsgütl draws attention to the confusion of species and habitats in Egyptian art. A

leopard with clear spots but long upright neck appears on the pithos fragment found at Tell el-Dab^a (p. 288 and note 48 below).

³⁶ MORGAN 1988, 41–44, 146–150.

³⁷ PHILLIPS 2008, 193–206 (esp. 204–206); MORGAN 1988, 41–44, 146–150. Middle Kingdom forerunner: Tomb of Khnumhotep II, Beni Hasan, SHEDID 1994, pls. 105, 106.

³⁸ MILITELLO 1998, (pl. 6, new reconstruction drawing); REHAK 1997. Colour photograph: SAKELLARAKIS 1981, 121 (below).

³⁹ MARINATOS & HIRMER 1976, comb from Rutsi with leopards, pl. 246 (below); MORGAN 1988, pl. 186.



Fig. 15 Large cat chasing bird. Detail from the miniature frieze, West House, Akrotiri, Thera Late Cycladic I (DOUMAS 1992, pl. 33)

composition, as, of course, they are at Tell el-Dab^ca, and a small griffin was part of the Tell el-Dab^ca frieze as well (MORGAN, this volume).

The Late Minoan I period – the time of the Tell el-Dab^ca Hunt Frieze – is, as we see, strikingly lacking in depictions of leopards in paintings. The Knossos fragment is almost certainly leopard but the Theran feline is ambiguous. The existence of leopards from Mycenae and Rutsi on the mainland, however, suggests that more examples may have existed, now lost to the record.

From the later LM/LH III period, examples are even fewer, now restricted to wall paintings and divorced from the hunt. Amongst the paintings from the so-called ‘Unexplored Mansion’ in the town of Knossos, was a fragment showing part of an animal with oval spots and delineated hairs.⁴⁰ Cameron dates the painting to LM II–III A and compares the spots to those of deer in an LM III A painting from Ayia Triada.⁴¹ They could,

however, have belonged to a leopard (and closely resemble those of the later Pylos leopards). The scale of the animal should be relatively large but the context of the scene has not survived. A border below indicates that it is a couchant animal, a hierarchic posture appropriate for a feline.

From the later, Mycenaean palace period (LH III B, 13th century BCE) large scale leopards accompanied griffins, both with stylized oval spots, in Hall 46 at Pylos.⁴²

In no other Aegean painting than the frieze of Tell el-Dab^ca do lions occur in a hunt scene with leopards. In fact, the only lion hunt known from Aegean painting is the small sub-scene above the Departure Town in the Miniature Frieze from Thera (MARINATOS, this volume, fig. 35). However, it is notable that the lion chasing deer on the east side of the South Wall and the griffin and large feline chasing their prey on the south side of the East Wall head towards the

⁴⁰ CAMERON 1984, 137–138, 147–148, 150.

⁴¹ PERNIER & BANTI 1947, pl. 21.

⁴² LANG 1969, 99–101, pls. 54–57, P. Called by Lang “lion” albeit “unleonine”.

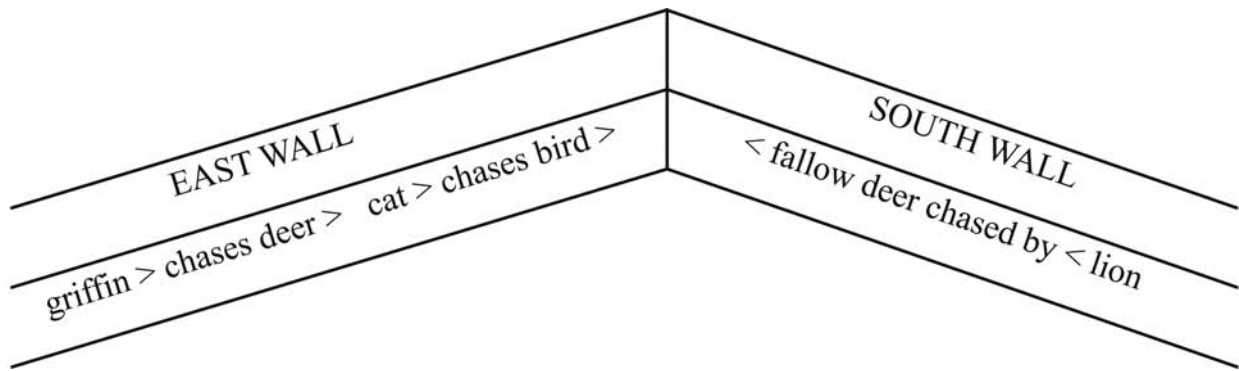


Fig. 16 Diagram of the hunting animals in the Theran miniature frieze

same corner of the room, signalling an iconographic relationship (Fig. 16).

The only known instances of the combination of lion and leopard outside the Tell el-Dab^a paintings, are from the Shaft Graves at Mycenae. In fact, outside Tell el-Dab^a, the Shaft Graves of Circle A, Graves III, IV and V, have more examples of leopard-like cats than anywhere else in the Aegean. Three are depicted in the context of the hunt, one hunting alongside lions, another in combat with a lion.

From Shaft Grave V came the dagger blade with felines attacking birds in a Nilotic landscape (Fig.

17), which we have seen recalls the theme of the Theran Hunt Landscape. The spots are rendered as dashes and the species is unclear, but the pouncing and prowling postures of the animals are strikingly expressive of the feline hunt.

On gold inlays from a box found in Shaft Grave III, the animals hunt their prey amidst a landscape of palms (Fig. 18).⁴³ From the same grave came small gold cut-outs (probably sewn onto clothing) of heraldic spotted felines seated on stylised palms and companion pieces with spotted deer on palms⁴⁴ – the predator and the prey. The gold inlays come remarkably close to



Fig. 17 Inlaid dagger blade, Shaft Grave V, Mycenae. Late Helladic I Archaeological Museum, Athens (drawing SMITH 1965 b, fig. 105a)

⁴³ KARO 1930, nos. 119, 120, pl. XXXIII; position of leopard altered in MORGAN 1988, 58.

⁴⁴ KARO 1930, no. 50 (felines), 45–46 (deer), pl. XXVI.

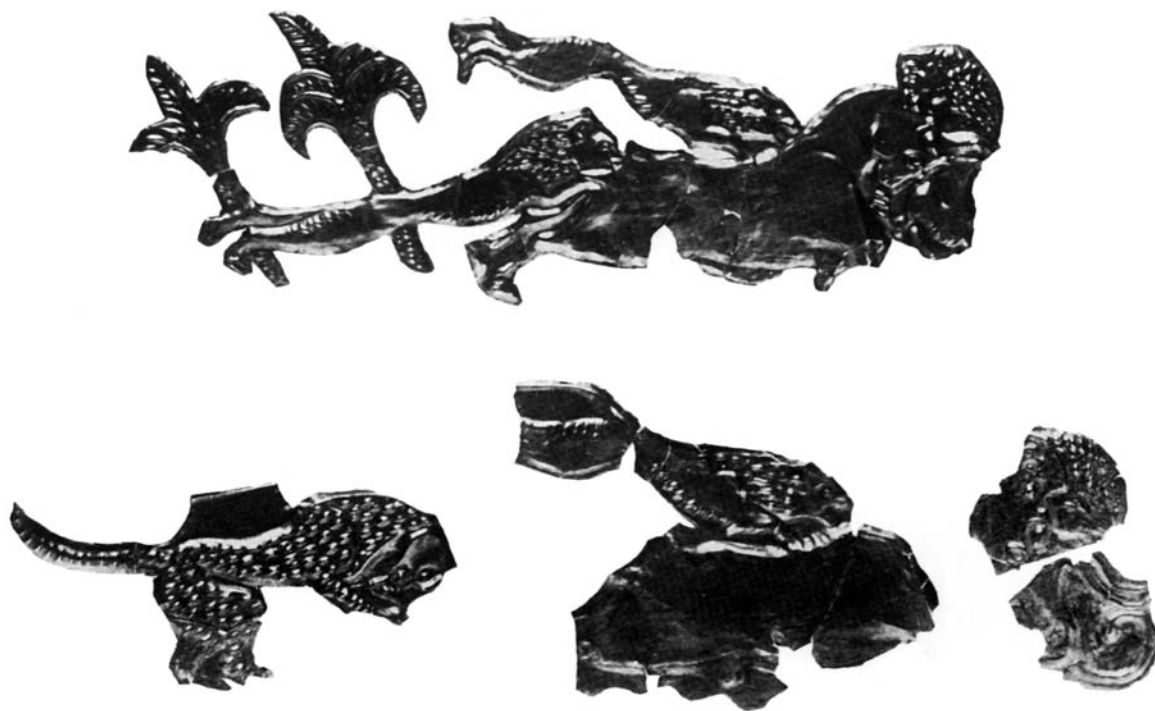


Fig. 18 Gold inlays, Shaft Grave III, Mycenae. Late Helladic I; Archaeological Museum, Athens. Photo: TAP

the narrative flow of a hunt that one would expect to find in a wall painting. Three lions attack one bull, two from behind, one from in front. Another attacks a second victim from behind, while yet another attacks (the same victim?) from in front. The single leopard stands on its hind legs as it apparently devours its prey. Unfortunately the prey has not survived, but the fact that the leopard actually attacks is apparent from the posture. The lions and leopard occupy separate inlays and were probably on different sides of the box. In the Tell el-Dab^{ca} frieze, too, there is no indisputable evidence either from the surviving fragments of the animals or the associated landscape, that lions and leopards were in the same part of the frieze.

In contrast, a gold jewellery strip from Shaft Grave III has two stylised leopards and two lions,⁴⁵ while a gold pommel from Shaft Grave IV is embossed with a lion attacking a leopard, both sets of jaws entrenched in flesh, bodies interlocked in a centrifugal battle (Fig. 19). The leopard is distinguished by its spots. Here the battle of life and death has nothing to do with the hunt for sustenance. It is a battle of power, one appropriate to the pommel of a warrior's funerary weapon.

None of the large spotted felines in the Aegean corpus is as well observed as the Tell el-Dab^{ca} leopards. Even the Knossos head has a singularly un-feline eye with its round pupil set in an iris surrounded by white. (Feline eyes have no whites and the pupil is a vertical slit.) The Mallia leopard axe is schematic, as are the animals on the Mycenae pommel and inlays. The Theran



Fig. 19 Gold pommel, Shaft Grave IV, Mycenae (scale: c. 1:1) Late Helladic I; Archaeological Museum, Athens (HOOD 1978, fig. 174)

⁴⁵ KARO 1930, pl. XXXII, no. 109.



Fig. 20 Inlaid dagger blade, from a tholos tomb at Rutsi, Messenia, c. Late Helladic II; Archaeological Museum, Athen 8340 (ARUZ, BENZEL and EVANS 2008, 122, fig. 36)

feline with its blue coloration has an air of the fantasy of its companion griffin.

On the other hand, on both sides of an inlaid dagger from Rutsi (Fig. 20), which is slightly later than the Mycenae daggers and hence contemporary with the Tell el-Dab^{ca} paintings (LH II/ LM IB), two leopards in a rocky landscape with sparse vegetation stalk with appropriately feline stealth, while a third gallops head-first towards the point of the blade. With lowered head, hind parts higher than the creeping fore legs, the two stalking felines capture the essence of the leopard's hunting tactics. Their prey (no longer fully visible) appears to have been a bird. Such close observation of feline stealth is apparent also in the stalking cat in the Ayia Triada painting (note 38), with its lowered head and raised back, and the felines on the inlaid dagger blade from Shaft Grave V (Fig. 17), who creep with stealth and pounce with measured aim. The Rutsi leopards, like those from Tell el-Dab^{ca}, express the leopard hunting habits through their movements, revealing a closer familiarity with the animal. Even so, the Rutsi leopards are curious looking animals, with their dog-like ears and narrow snout, and the body markings, especially in the animal on the right, is schematic. It could even be that the leopard movements on this dagger take their inspiration from the Tell el-Dab^{ca} or other contemporary painters, rather than from the animal itself.

Despite the large number of lions on Aegean seals, leopards, with their detailed hides, do not appear to be a candidate for glyptic iconography.

Occasionally, the hide of a feline is marked by circles, but the animals are generic.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the feline on a seal from Vapheio in Fig. 21, though possibly a lioness, creeps with the stealth typical of a leopard, with low slung head like the central feline on the Rutsi dagger.

Altogether there are, to my knowledge, twelve examples of felines in Aegean art (outside Tell el-Dab^{ca}) that could qualify as representations of leopards or similar large spotted cats (nos. 6–9 could also be small cats, as could the 'snake goddess' attribute and the Zakros rhyton, which are not included in this list): (1) the Mallia axe; (2) the Knossos fresco fragment (Fig. 14); (3) the Theran miniature painting (Fig. 15); (4) the Mycenae Shaft Grave III gold inlays (Fig. 18); (5) the Mycenae Shaft Grave IV pommel (Fig. 19); (6) the Mycenae Shaft Grave V inlaid dagger (Fig. 17); (7) the Mycenae Shaft Grave III gold jewellery strip; (8) the Mycenae Shaft Grave III cut-outs; (9) the Rutsi comb; (10) the Rutsi dagger (Fig. 20); (11) the Unexplored Mansion painted fragment; (12) the

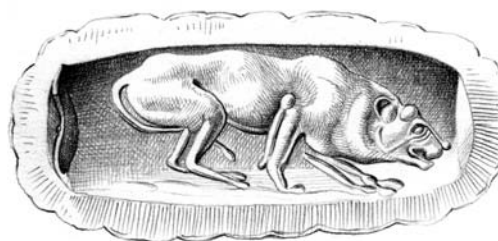


Fig. 21 Seal from Vapheio. LH II A (CMS I, 246)

⁴⁶ CMS VI, 362 (feline with lion's tufted tail end), 362 (long-necked animal with lion's tail), 367 (cat).

Pylos painting. Of these twelve, five are from the Mycenae Shaft Graves. Only on the Mycenae and Rutsi daggers and at Pylos is there more than one feline in a composition. Only at Mycenae is a leopard associated with a lion; only at Thera and Pylos is the feline associated with a griffin. The Theran, Rutsi and Mycenae dagger felines, and perhaps the Knossos leopard, chase birds (as do the cats without spots in the Ayia Triada painting). Only on the Rutsi dagger do leopards hunt together. The Mycenae pommel has lion and leopard in combat. Only the Mycenae inlays show lions and leopards hunting large mammals together and the leopard, though clearly pouncing on its prey, is not attacking alongside the lions. Unfortunately, we cannot tell what this leopard's prey was, but the position of the animal – up on its hind legs – indicates that it was large. Not one of these animals is as clearly defined as a leopard as those from Tell el-Dab^{ca}. Some have spots, some have dashes on their bodies. Given that on the East African Leopard rosette spots are on the body, while the markings on head, neck and legs are black, it is perhaps not surprising that artists sometimes used spots and sometimes dashes. Only at Tell el-Dab^{ca} does one have the feeling that leopards might actually have been seen.

It is significant that leopards appear in more than one context at Tell el-Dab^{ca}. A large fragment of painted plaster (yet to be published) shows a clearly defined spot on a yellow hide against a red background with blue plants. It can only belong to a large-scale leopard, and I suggest that it should be associated with the large-scale griffin, reconstructed by Clairly Palyvou

(MORGAN, this volume (griffin), fig. 3), which is assumed by Manfred Bietak to have flanked a throne in the interior of the palace.⁴⁷ A pithos fragment found at Tell el-Dab^{ca}, to be published by Irmgard Hein, has a leopard, apparently chasing an ungulate in flying gallop.⁴⁸ The animal is less well observed than in the painting, with raised neck uncharacteristic of the chase (like the Theran feline), but with distinctive rosette spots. What is significant is that the leopard is involved in a hunt of large mammals. Like the Mycenae inlays, it provides a glimpse of a fuller environment. But it is the Tell el-Dab^{ca} painting that provides the fullest iconographic context for leopards in their associations with other animals, humans and landscape setting.

NEAR EAST

In the Near East, as in the Aegean and Egypt, there are few representations of leopards, considerably fewer than of lions. Most of these belong to a period considerably earlier than the Tell el-Dab^{ca} paintings.⁴⁹ Statuettes of leopards and lions found at entrances to Early Dynastic temples demonstrate their guardian role, as does the burial of their bones in the foundations of a temple.⁵⁰ Biblical references allude to the animal's ferocity and speed.⁵¹ Early Dynastic cylinder seals occasionally show a leopard attacking its prey – bull or goat – in the context of both real and mythical creatures.⁵² It is interesting to note that the leopard is partnered with a lion in the attack. Such early 'contest scenes' in Mesopotamian glyptic art are said to evoke the conflict between man and 'the enemy of civilized life',⁵³ and occasionally the leopard, while

⁴⁷ BIETAK & PALYVOU 2000; BIETAK, MARINATOS & PALYVOU 2007, 40, fig. 36 (reconstruction of griffins); cf. 22, fig. 16 (reconstruction of architectural plan with proposed throne room).

⁴⁸ Presented in a paper by Irmgard Hein at the Late Bronze Age Conference SCIAM 2000 in Vienna Jan 30–Feb 1 2003. BIETAK, HEIN *et al.* 1994, Kat. Nr. 359, p. 261, Catalogue entry: Irmgard Hein, Clay analysis is forthcoming. It is thought by Hein that the vessel may be Levantine. For a Cycladic comparison see the griffin jar from Kea: CUMMER & SCHOFIELD 1984, pl. 79 (1318); MORGAN 1988, fig. 40). A less carefully defined feline (lion?) appears on a jug assumed to be from Thera: DEMAKOPOULOU and CROWEL 1993.

⁴⁹ BOROWSKI 1998, 201; COLE 1972, 36–38; HODDER 2006, pls. 2, 9–10, 106 (Çatal Hüyük); NYS and BRETSCHNEIDER 2008, figs. 1, 11–21, 29–31, 33, 36–39, 46–7, 51, 62–65, 69–71.

⁵⁰ NYS and BRETSCHNEIDER 2008, 555, 563. Cf. a cylinder text referring to the placing of felines at the entrance to a temple (*ibid.*).

⁵¹ KEEL 1978, 85–86.

⁵² Eg. EVANS, PM IV, 529, fig. 475; WARD 1910, 416 and figs. 179, 195, 196; PRITCHARD 1969, fig. 678; COLLON 1987, 188, no. 901 (pairs of hunting leopards, as rolled out); NYS and BRETSCHNEIDER 2008, Figs. 31, 47.

⁵³ PRITCHARD 1969, 330; NYS and BRETSCHNEIDER 2008, 508, note 76 (with further references).

⁵⁴ FRANKFORT 1939, pl. XIII f, pl. XIV b; COLLON 1995, pl. 56b, Early Dynastic III, c. 2600 BCE.

attacking its prey, is attacked from behind by a man, 'bearded hero', or bull-man.⁵⁴

Yet these are not naturalistic images of the hunt. Instead they present antithetic creatures, whose posture of standing upright on two legs echoes that of the human conqueror. No doubt the ambivalence towards lions (powerful hence associated with victory, but also potentially dangerous) was also applied to leopards.

Throughout ancient art, the balance of power for lions and, by extension, leopards, shifts between positive and negative aggression, between identification with man the ruler, man the vanquisher, and identification with the evil other to be vanquished. The symbolic shift has its basis in the reality of life: felines are hunters, felines are hunted; man identifies, man overpowers. In many cultures in Africa and Asia the leopard is seen as an embodiment of courage and aggression, both positive and negative.⁵⁵

A striking example of these man-animal relationships has recently been unearthed by Peter Pfälzner in a royal tomb at Qatna in Syria.⁵⁶ It is a quiver, decorated in three registers with mirror images of: at the top, lion with broken down ungulate; in the middle, man holding the legs of an ungulate; and in the lower register, man brandishing a dagger while stepping on to the back of a falling bull, which is attacked from beneath by a leopard.

EGYPT

As an African rather than a European animal, one might expect there to be more instances of leopards in Egyptian iconography than in Aegean. Yet in Ancient Egypt too, the leopard is infrequently depicted, especially in comparison to the lion. As a solitary, basically nocturnal animal, the leopard would have been relatively rarely seen in the wild. As in Aegean art, therefore, there are sometimes confusions amongst artists as to the details of their depictions. In some instances in Egyptian paintings, leopards and cheetahs are confused, both in depiction

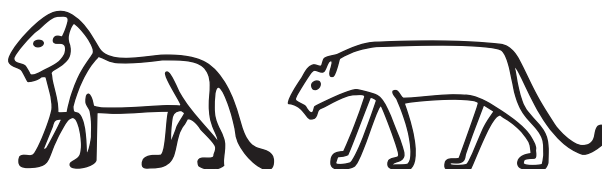


Fig. 22 Hieroglyphic signs for (a) lion and (b) leopard (GARDINER 1957, 460, nos. 22, 24)

and, in the hunt scene of the tomb of Baqt III at Beni Hasan, in the accompanying hieroglyphic inscription.⁵⁷ Yet, as in the Rutsi dagger and the Tell el-Dab^{ca} painting, it is the movements of the animal that is most characteristic as a diagnostic trait. Both the hieroglyphic determinative (classifier) for leopard and Egyptian representations of the animal show a feline with lowered head (Fig. 22).⁵⁸ This posture – which contrasts sharply with the characteristic upright head position of the lion, cheetah or serval – is typical of the leopard, appropriate as it is to the secretive stalking tactics of its hunt.

In Egyptian art leopards are seen primarily (though not exclusively) in a hunting context, particularly prior to the New Kingdom. Leopards, as well as lions, hunting dogs and ungulates as prey, appear first in the Predynastic period. In the Hierakonpolis hunt palette, they form part of a menagerie of real and imaginary creatures, including lions and an *akhekh*, a prototypical griffin, engaged in conflict.⁵⁹ On an ivory knife handle from Gebel el Tanif, the predators, in more orderly array, are those of the Tell el-Dab^{ca} painting: leopard, lion, dog and griffin.⁶⁰ This is the animal world of the hunt, without human intervention, a world situated in the deserts away from human habitation, where chaotic forces are visualized in the monstrous, and real and imaginary predators define the concept of aggression.

It is not surprising that leopards should appear alongside mythical creatures. Though clearly grounded in reality, they would have

⁵⁵ SAUNDERS 1995, 68–9.

⁵⁶ PFÄLZNER 2009, 200. PFÄLZNER dates the quiver to the 15th/14th c.

⁵⁷ NEWBERRY 1893, II, pl. IV; OSBORN & OSBORNOVÁ 1998, 120.

⁵⁸ GARDINER 1957, 460, E.24. OSBORN & OSBORNOVÁ 1998, 119.

⁵⁹ LANGE & HIRMER 1968, pl. 2; HOULIHAN 1996, pl. 1; OSBORN & OSBORNOVÁ 1998, pl. 12b.

⁶⁰ OSBORN & OSBORNOVÁ 1998, 7, figs. 1–12.

been rarely seen in the wild and hence imagined as living in the desert alongside monstrous beasts which embodied the unseen forces of chaos. This combination of rarity and reality, along with its reputation for stealthy aggression and an impressive skin, gave the leopard significant value.

In the V Dynasty tomb of Ptahotep at Saqqara, lions and leopards are shown in a hunting scene, the lions as predators, the leopard solitary, in conjunction with men with hunting dogs and a variety of prey, while on an adjacent section of the wall a lion and a leopard have been captured and are being brought home from the hunt in individual cages.⁶¹ It has been suggested that they are being brought to the royal court as prestigious pets.⁶²

Despite the fact that leopards inhabited Egypt,⁶³ there is evidence that both the animal skins and captured leopards were brought as tribute from Punt. A leopard is led on a leash by Nubians in the tribute scene in the Tomb of Rekhmire, Theban Tomb 100 (Fig. 23).⁶⁴ The scene appears in a register immediately below the row of Aegean men bringing their own 'tribute'. Here, then, is an international trading network in which live African animals would be seen by Aegean travellers. The tomb dates to the reigns of Tuthmosis III–Amenhotep II, just after the Tell el-Dab^a paintings.

Leopard skins were brought as tribute to Egypt from both Punt and Asia.⁶⁵ The skins were worn by Egyptian priests and pharaohs for ceremonies and sacrifices, including the all important 'Opening of the Mouth' ceremony, and therefore held in the highest esteem.

The rarity of the animal and its exotic skin associate leopards with the mythical world of the

beyond as well as the heroic world of the hunt. This association, grounded, as we saw, in Predynastic art, incorporates the leopard into the human world of warfare during Pharonic times. On Middle Kingdom ivory 'magic wands', leopards, lions and mythical creatures appear side by side. On one a leopard actually attacks a bound enemy.⁶⁶ Leopards appear in hunting scenes in the Middle Kingdom in the tomb of Senbi (B.1) at Meir, the tomb of Tehuti-hetep at el Bersheh, and the Beni Hasan tombs of Baqt III (15) and Khety (17).⁶⁷ In all of these the tomb owner is shown hunting with (at Meir and Beni Hasan) his trained dogs, attacking ungulates. Lions also attack, but the leopard walks as though isolated from the action. This is how mythical animals attributed to the far-reaching deserts are portrayed: distant and distanced from the carnage. Interaction for leopards in the game of life and death appears to be restricted to procreation; a mating scene appears in the midst of the carnage of the hunt in the tomb of Ptahhotep, and in the tomb of Senbi a pair of leopards mate, amongst animals giving birth, suckling and dying.

As part of a hunting scene in mural programmes, to my knowledge, the leopard occurs only in two OK tombs and four MK tombs. In *all* instances, the leopard, though in the midst of the carnage, appears as a solitary animal (or with its mate). Hunting dogs and lions attack, ungulates flee or fall under the predator's paws, but the leopard merely walks in solitary state. Why should this be?

The leopard holds an ambivalent relationship with lions and dogs – the other predatory animals in the Tell el-Dab^a painting and Egyptian hunt scenes. Though itself a powerful predator, leopards are subject to occasional attack by hunt-

⁶¹ DAVIES 1900, pls. XXI, XXII. An earlier instance of a leopard in a hunt scene occurs in the 4th Dynasty tomb of Nefer-Maat at Meidum (SALEH and SOUROUZIAN 1987, No. 25a).

⁶² HOULIHAN 1996, 91, 198.

⁶³ Cf. p. 280 note 25. NYS and BRETSCHNEIDER's claim that leopards were extinct by the 18th Dynasty (1988, 557) is unsubstantiated. Even in recent times, leopards inhabited the Western and Eastern Deserts, Mediterranean Coastal Desert, and the Sinai (OSBORN and OSBORNOVÁ 1998, 119).

⁶⁴ HOULIHAN 1996, pl. XVI, DAVIES 1943, vol. II, pl. XI. Cf. TT 91 (Tuthmsis IV–Amenhotep III). PORTER & MOSS 1960, 185–187 (TT 91); 206–215 (TT 100).

⁶⁵ OSBORN & OSBORNOVÁ 1998, 121; KLEINSGÜTL 1997, 67.

⁶⁶ HAYES 1990, 249, fig. 159; OSBORN & OSBORNOVÁ 1998, fig. 1–14b. The leopard is recognizable by its spots, or by the low-slung head which distinguishes it from the lion: MALEK 1993, 78, fig. 46.

⁶⁷ Meir: BLACKMAN 1914, I, pls. VI, VIII; el Bersheh: GRIF-FITH & NEWBERRY 1894, pl. VII; Beni Hasan: NEWBERRY 1893, pls. IV (tomb 15, Baqt), XIII (tomb 17, Khety).

⁶⁸ Of all the iconographic instances, only the Mycenae pommel shows a leopard attacked by a lion, Fig. 19, but this may be poetic licence rather than behavioural observation – witness Aegean instances of lion attacking griffin and griffin attacking lion (MORGAN this volume (Griffin) figs. 23–26); cf. MORGAN 1988, 52–53).



Fig. 23 Leopard led on a leash by a Nubian. Detail of a tribute scene, Tomb of Rekhmire (TT 100), Thebes (18th Dynasty, Tuthmosis III–Amenhotep II (HOULIHAN 1996, pl. XVI.)

ing dogs and by lions and hyenas, who drive them off their prey.⁶⁸ Yet, as ubiquitous carnivores, they themselves are known to attack lion cubs and domestic dogs. Perhaps it is as much for this ambivalence as for the solitary habits of the animal (which make it difficult to observe) that artists in Egypt showed the leopard alongside lions and in the vicinity of dogs but never attacking another animal or themselves being attacked. In the paintings and reliefs, they hold an ambivalent, almost neutral, position between predator and prey.

In the New Kingdom tombs, the leopard appears occasionally in tribute scenes of mural programmes (as in the Tomb of Rekhmire, Fig.

23), but not at all, it seems from present evidence,⁶⁹ in a desert hunt. A major exception may come not from a tomb painting but, significantly, from a palace. M. Nicolakaki-Kentrou reports that amongst the paintings from Site K at Malqata there are animals in a hunt scene: “bovines, ungulate, dog, lion, leopard (?)”. They are apparently set within a landscape of plants. The background colour varies between yellow, white, blue or “red-brown” ground. Bulls predominate.⁷⁰ An early report on Malqata also refers to a desert hunt with “a black and white bull running across mountains indicated by blue, yellow and red undulations, sprinkled with rosettes”.⁷¹ This scene apparently decorated the wall behind the throne

⁶⁹ According to PORTER & MOSS (1960, 353) there is a leopard in a hunt scene in the tomb of Amenomopet (TT 276). There is no published photograph, simply a reference to negatives of Theban tombs taken by Prof. Siegfried Schott, University of Göttingen (nos. 4305–4310). Copies of these are housed in the Archives of the Griffith Institute of the Ashmolean Museum in

Oxford and I am grateful to John Baines and Jaromir Malek for enabling me to see these. The photographs show offerings of hunted animals, including a striped hyena hung from a pole, but not a leopard.

⁷⁰ NICOLAKAKI-KENTROU 2000.

⁷¹ DARRESY 1903, 167 (quote translated from the French).

in the Audience Hall of the King's Palace. Nicolakaki-Kentrou suggests that the Site K hunt scene would have been appropriate for a Jubilee Festival edifice, advertising the pharaoh's great deeds, including the killing of bulls and lions. What is significant in both parts of the site, is the association of the hunt with the ruler.

It is apparently unclear whether the leopard fragments belong to live animals or to hides (there are also human figures). But the existence of these hunt scenes – however fragmentary – opens a window on to post Tell el-Dab^a palatial paintings in New Kingdom Egypt. It may also help to explain the anomaly of the funerary equipment of Tutankhamun, which, uniquely in Egyptian art, includes at least four objects in which a leopard is shown actually attacking its prey.⁷² On the ivory veneered box found in the Annex, lions and a leopard appear in juxtaposition with the king, as the animal equivalent of royal valour in hunting and, by extension, warfare. The other three instances allude to the symbolic martial function of the objects they adorn: a gold buckle and gold appliqué from a harness (for the king's horse and chariot), and a dagger-sheath.

These scenes from Tutankhamun's funerary equipment are unique. No other leopard from an Egyptian scene appears to attack its prey. And though lions and leopards do occur together in hunt scenes in the Old and Middle Kingdom, they do not work as a team. In New Kingdom tombs of the Nobles, there are no hunt scenes in which any large feline – lion, leopard or cheetah – takes part in an attack. Only dogs accompany their masters in the desert hunt. The anomaly evident in the tomb of Tutankhamun (and perhaps in the palace at Malqata), in which leopards not only appear in a hunting context but also, uniquely (in the tomb), attack their prey, may be explained by the assumption that by this time

both lions and leopards had been entirely appropriated by royal iconography. It was apparently no longer appropriate to show lions and leopards as hunting predators in non-royal contexts. Nor was the hunt scene an appropriate image for royal funerary mural programmes. That the feline hunt was specifically palatial, is further demonstrated by a very fragmentary scene of a lion in flying gallop hunting a calf from Room F in the Great Palace at Amarna, one of three large interconnected columned halls forming the Throne Room Complex.⁷³ The fragmentary hunt paintings at Malqata and Amarna, and the uniquely preserved funerary equipment of Tutankhamun's tomb, afford us vital glimpses of royal iconography.

Presumably, this association of the leopard with royalty was purely symbolic. Despite the fact that leopards appear to have occasionally been kept in captivity for the pleasure and prestige of the pharaoh, there is no evidence that the animal was ever trained for use in hunting.⁷⁴

Such symbolic associations between the leopard and ruling authority can be witnessed in African art, particularly in the royal art of Benin. Seen as the 'animal-other' of governing and royal males, the leopard bestows the authority to take human life.⁷⁵

From what we understand of Egyptian royal iconography, it is clear that in the New Kingdom a hunt scene would be appropriate for the decoration of a palace. What has surprised us all is that such a palatial hunt scene should, at Tell el-Dab^a, be painted not by Egyptian artists, but by Aegean.

THE FELINE HUNT AS AN INTERCULTURAL THEME

Within the milieu of increasingly close relations between Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant in the mid 2nd millennium, the most widely used intercultural theme was, surely, the hunt. Comprehen-

⁷² Ivory veneered box: OSBORN & OSBORNOVÁ 1998, 120, fig. 7-224; gold buckle: on display in the Cairo Museum (Carter No. 050tt(1)); harness attachment of gold appliqué: FELDMAN 2006, 34, p.6; dagger-sheath: British Museum 1972, No. 36 (right); ARUZ, BENZEL and EVANS 2008, 390, fig. 121.

⁷³ WEATHERHEAD 2007, 21, 30, 347; fig. 17, no. 1. The painted pavement programme had a central pathway of bound foreign captives, bordered by ponds, birds and calves amongst marsh plants and apparently this feline hunt.

⁷⁴ HOULIHAN 1996, 69; OSBORN & OSBORNOVÁ 1998, 120. OK 'tame' leopards: Tomb of Nerfermaat Meidum (PETRIE 1892, pl. XVII); OSBORN & OSBORNOVÁ 1998, 120, fig. 7-221. Tomb of Gemnikai at Saqqara (OSBORN & OSBORNOVÁ 1998, 40, fig. 4.34). NK leopard crouched beneath a couch: Theban Tomb 396 (PORTER and MOSS 1960, 442).

⁷⁵ ROBERTS 1995, 115, 166–175.



Fig. 24 Detail of an Inlaid dagger. Tomb of Queen Ahhotep, Thebes. Ahmose I, Egyptian Museum, Cairo (ARUZ, BENZEL and EVANS 2008, 121, Cat. 68)

sible cross-culturally, the feline hunt was closely associated with prestige and royal power.

In the early New Kingdom, during the reign of Ahmose (hence Late Minoan IA), features appear in Egyptian art which are typical of Aegean art and are to become part of international parlance. These features relate specifically to felines and, by implication, to warfare. A hunt with lion chasing bull in flying gallop amidst descending rocks appears on an inlaid dagger (Fig. 24), and an 'Aegean-style' griffin on an axe appears as part of an iconographic message of royal domination (MORGAN this volume, Griffin, Fig. 5). Both came from the royal tomb of Ahmose's mother, Ahhotep,⁷⁶ and both were ceremonial weapons which, like the inlaid daggers from the Mycenae Shaft Graves, had significant meaning applicable to their form.⁷⁷

While there are isolated instances of the flying gallop in Egyptian art prior to the time of Ahmose,⁷⁸ as there are on Syrian seals,⁷⁹ it is notable that characteristically Aegean features appear on weapons at this crucial time in Egyptian history, when the Theban princes had just succeeded in expelling the Hyksos rulers of Northern Egypt from their capital at Avaris (Tell el-Dab^a). Slightly later, it is crucially significant that it is at *Tell el-Dab^a* that these Aegean wall paintings occur. The 16th–15th centuries BCE laid the ground for the so-called 'International Style' of the 14th century, in which iconographic elements and idioms passed freely between Egypt, the Aegean and the Near East.⁸⁰ The position of Tell el-Dab^a makes this palatial site – placed on the east-west route and on the Delta leading to the Mediterranean – crucial in this development.

⁷⁶ EVANS, *PM I*, 550–551, 715; IV, 191; KANTOR 1947, 62–76; SMITH 1965a, 125–126, pls. 84b, 86; HELCK 1979 (56–60); SALEH and SOUROUZIAN 1987, nos. 121 and 122 (colour); MORGAN 1988, 53, pl. 63; JÁNOSI 1992; HANKEY 1993 (written when the Tell el-Dab^a paintings were thought to be Hyksos); WARREN 1995, 13; ARUZ, BENZEL and EVANS 2008, cat.no. 38 (colour). Inlaid daggers may have had their technical origins at Byblos (CLINE 1998, 214 and n.148 references), but where each was manufactured is not always easy to determine. EVANS assumed that the Ahhotep dagger was of Minoan workmanship (EVANS, *PM IV*, 527); PERSSON (1942, 178) and KANTOR (1947, 64) took it to be Egyptian; LAFFINEUR considers it to be of Levantine craftsmanship, commissioned in Egypt (1998, 62).

⁷⁷ On the dagger, the hunt moves from hilt to the centre of the blade and is met by a line of four grasshoppers. The meaning of the grasshoppers is not clear. Perhaps the symbolism is akin to that of the fly in New Kingdom Egypt, which stood for military achievement (cf. JÁNOSI 1992, n. 35). As on the axe, there could then be a symbolism of collaborative action with Egyptian and Aegean elements juxtaposed.

⁷⁸ The flying gallop is adopted by a hunting dog and gazelle on a plate found in the Tomb of Qubbet el-

Hawa at Aswan dating, astonishingly, to the end of the Old Kingdom (DECKER & HERB 1994, pl. CXLII, J 49). This early example is, however, anomalous, as is a painting at Mealla of a dog chasing a hare in flying gallop dated to the 1st Intermediate Period (SMITH 1965b, 190B). An ivory inlay of an ungulate in flying gallop from Kerma dates to the XII–XIII Dynasty (SMITH 1965a, pl. 82B). The earliest known instances of the flying gallop in Minoan art are on seal impressions from Phaestos (CMS II.5, 259, 263, 276, 277, 285) dating to MM IB–MM II, c. 1900–1700 BC, into which time span the inlay from Kerma also falls. On the flying gallop see S. REINACH *Revue Arch.* 1900–1901; EVANS, *PM I*, 711, 713–720; KANTOR 1947, 62–76, 92–97, 106–107; SMITH 1965b, 26, 155; CROWLEY 1989, 113–117.

⁷⁹ COLLON 2000, 284–285. The examples cited date to c.1720–1700 BC.

⁸⁰ See in particular: KANTOR 1947; SCHACHERMEYER 1967; SMITH 1965b; CROWLEY 1989; articles by CAUBET and REHAK and YOUNGER in CLINE and HARRIS-CLINE 1998; and, most recently, FELDMAN 2002, 2006; ARUZ 2008, ARUZ, BENZEL and EVANS 2008. Issues of chronology and iconography in relation to the Tell el-Dab^a Hunt Frieze are further discussed in MORGAN 2006.

The Hunt Frieze is Aegean in idiom and technique. Its theme would have been at home in both the Aegean and Egypt. But at Tell el-Dab^ca the theme of the feline hunt has been given extraordinary emphasis. It covered two, maybe three, walls. There is not one lion but ten, not one leopard but six. The whole theme, with its emphasis on feline predation, has been expanded and developed for the specific ceremonial and palatial context.

The pride of leopards at Tell el-Dab^ca is, in our present state of knowledge, unique. There is no other extant painting or relief in the ancient world that shows a number of leopards, rather than one or two. In reality, leopards hunt in solitude not in prides. Why this extraordinary emphasis?

In terms of Aegean art, the painting expands on animal predation. Lions appear together on two daggers from Mycenae⁸¹ (MARINATOS this volume, fig. 25) and gold inlays (Fig. 18); leopards on the Rutsi dagger (Fig. 20). Otherwise, these predators are confined to single representations or occasionally pairs. Only rarely are they depicted at all in the surviving wall paintings of the Aegean. That more examples existed is evident from seals, which show lion hunts with relative frequency. But on the small surface of the seal, one or at most two animals is all that can be shown. Whether by chance or by default, there is no surviving Aegean evidence outside Tell el-Dab^ca for lions and leopards combined in a hunt, in association with a related scene of human hunters with dogs.⁸²

Yet, as we have seen, that very combination was familiar to Egyptian artists since early times and relatively popular during the Middle Kingdom. This combination – man + dog, lion, leopard, ungulates – is fundamentally Egyptian. The manner of portrayal in the Tell el-Dab^ca painting, however, is quintessentially Aegean. Significantly,

no animal would have been out of place in the art of either culture. Leopards, though rare, do appear in Aegean art, and lions and dogs make frequent appearances, at least on the small surfaces of seals. This is a clear case of a theme having intercultural parlance.

What is extraordinary – for the art of either culture – is the inclusion of so many leopards within the overall composition. This unique expression of a familiar theme seems to me to be a way of expanding on an element that is redolent of power and has a particularly African (i.e. Egyptian) flavour for Aegean artists. Lions were popular iconographic elements throughout the ancient world at the time and actual lions were not unknown in Greece. Leopards were iconographically rare and could never have been seen on Aegean soil. Just as the art of the elite Shaft Graves have a striking concentration of leopards, so, even more significantly, does the palatial art of Tell el-Dab^ca: six in the Hunt Frieze, one in a large scale painting, and one on a pithos.

Brought to Egypt to paint the walls of an Egyptian palace, the Aegean artists took an intercultural theme – the hunt – drawing both on their home traditions and the traditions of their hosts, and, adapting to their situation, expanded on the theme by elevating the ‘local’ leopard to the ranks of the ‘international’ lion, making them partners in the hunt.

Felines were deemed appropriate for palatial programmes in the Aegean. They appear at the palace of Knossos and later at Pylos. The extraordinary concentration on lions, leopards and griffins in the iconography of the Shaft Graves is surely explicable in terms of the warrior aristocracy which they served, without doubt the ruling class. Feline power is the power of rulers.⁸³

In Egypt, the hunt was originally a royal theme. It appears in the Old Kingdom pyramid temple of Sahure and the sun temple of

⁸¹ MARINATOS and HIRMER 1976/86, pl. XLIX centre and pl. L; pl. XLIX below and pl. L1 below, MARINATOS this volume, Fig. 25.

⁸² The hunters and dogs, which will appear in the final publication, most likely belonged to a related frieze on a neighboring wall. At least two dogs hunt deer in the Kea miniatures, but not directly with a hunter (MORGAN 1998b, fig. 7; 2005; forthcoming). Later, a pack of dogs appears in the Tiryns boar hunt scene (RODENWALDT 1912 (1976), pls. XIII, XIV) In neither case are felines involved.

⁸³ It is only at Thera – in the West House and, we now learn, Xeste 3 – that hunt scenes with felines appear in seemingly (though not certifiably) non-royal contexts. (But see MARINATOS this volume on the West House.) From Room 2 of Xeste 3, on the ground floor, a lion attacks a goat in a landscape of palms and rocks, while in the adjacent vestibule hunters capture a bull and an ibex (VLACHOPOULOS 2007, 108–109; 2008, 451, figs. 41.8, 41.9).

Niuserre⁸⁴ While we have no surviving palaces from this period, the theme was surely derived from palatial art. Egyptian palaces were built of mud-brick and they, complete with their mural programmes, have crumbled and disappeared. Only two scraps of palatial painting survive from the period preceding the palaces at Tell el-Dab^{ca}.⁸⁵ There is nothing else to compare. Yet when evidence for Egyptian palatial painting finally does appear – in the palace of Amenhotep III at Malqata – we find two desert hunts, one with feline predators, painted in rooms associated with kingship; and the theme appears to have continued in the Great Palace at Amarna. The numerous feline hunts on the objects found in the tomb of Tutankhamun suggest that other, lost, palaces may have had similar programmes.⁸⁶

The appearance of a hunt frieze with lions, leopards and a griffin as predators is, therefore, comprehensible in terms of the palatial context of Tell el-Dab^{ca}. But why bring Minoan artists to paint it?

All the evidence from Egypt suggests that relations with the Aegean were cordial. The precise context of Palace F, a ceremonial palace oriented adjacent to the Nile, en route to the Mediterranean, is significant.⁸⁷ As Bietak and Marinatos have argued, the specifically Minoan, even, with the Bulls Frieze, Knossian imagery, implies privileged contacts between the courts of Crete and Egypt.⁸⁸ A political treaty, or a diplomatic alliance on the model of a dynastic marriage, as mooted by Bietak,⁸⁹ is plausible. At the same time, the striking similarities between the Hunt Frieze and early Mycenaean art, hint at other

possible relationships. The early palace at Mycenae has not survived and we can only guess as to the contents of its wall paintings. In the wider scope of things, Egypt in the early New Kingdom, and especially in the time of Tuthmosis III, was expanding its domain and developing a heightened awareness of a larger world. The hunt would have been a convenient symbol of royal power. Aegean artists, known to have executed and influenced palatial painting in the Levant,⁹⁰ were clearly highly valued and their depictions of animals and landscape were extraordinary. Given all these considerations, the Egyptian ruler of Palace F at Tell el-Dab^{ca} commissioned Aegean artists to paint an appropriate programme of images to adorn a significant room in the palace. Perhaps it was the room in which Aegean emissaries or dignitaries, passing down the Nile Delta from the Mediterranean into Egypt, were formally met. Perhaps, in this room, official and ceremonial business in connection with international relations took place.

The hunt is part of a programme of interrelated images – bull-sports, human hunters, feline hunters – expressing masculine prowess and predatory power. While the bull-sports are closely allied to Knossian palatial iconography, with the hunt one is held within an international ambience with a theme as comprehensible in Egypt as in the Aegean or the Near East. This was an age in which ideas and images were circulating. No theme is more international than the hunt, no symbolism more approachable than the feline hunt. In emphasising the felines as predators – as these artists have so clearly done – the hunt

⁸⁴ DECKER and HERB 1994, J 20, J 22.

⁸⁵ From Deir el Ballas, the southern palace of Ahmose before he conquered Avaris. SMITH 1965 a, 158–159, fig. 53 (= 1981, 281, fig. 277 A).

⁸⁶ MORGAN 2004.

⁸⁷ MORGAN 2007.

⁸⁸ BIETAK, MARINATOS & PALLYVOU 2007, esp. 82 (with note 298), 85–86, 150; BIETAK 2007, 293.

⁸⁹ BIETAK 1996, 80; 2007, 293. On diplomatic marriages in the 18th dynasty: SCHULMAN 1979; and recently, with further references: M. LIVERANI 2008, 163–164; FELDMAN 2006, 68–71.

⁹⁰ See note 14 above. W.-D. and B. Niemeier, on the basis of Alalakh, Tel Kabri and Tell el-Dab^{ca}, argue for traveling Minoan artists within the context of diplomatic relations and gift exchange between rulers (NIEMEIER & NIEMEIER 2000 and see note 14); while CLINE & YASUR-

LANDAU (2007, 164) hypothesize that such itinerant artists at Kabri might have been recruited through Cypriot middlemen. FELDMAN (2007) sees the phenomenon of Minoan paintings in the Levant in terms of local sociopolitical changes in which ruling elites sought exotica for prestige, and BRYSSBAERT (2007b; 2008, 186–195) identifies sociopolitical and ideological affirmation of elites as the mechanism. Pfälzner argues for a “Levantine-Aegean” style at Qatna, with local and Aegean artists working together, under conditions of mobility and cultural exchange known to have existed within the courts of the ruling elites (PFÄLZNER & VON RÜDEN 2008, 108–109; cf. ZACCAGNINI 1983) while von Rügen proposes a network of cultural communication in which goods and ideas circulated throughout the Eastern Mediterranean and Near East (PFÄLZNER & VON RÜDEN 2008, 106; cf. WINTER 2000, 754–755).

inhabits the realm of royal symbolic prowess, so appropriate for a palace situated in the eastern most reaches of a rapidly expanding land. At the same time, Tell el-Dab^{ca} borders to the east what was an inhospitable land of swamps, rocks and

desert in which wild animals, including lions and leopards, would surely have roamed. For the Egyptian patron, the vitality of this Aegean painting must have been inspiring and evocative in its striking portrayal of the feline hunt.

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